

**FAMILY SYSTEMS AND TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS AS
THERAPEUTIC MODELS FOR ESTABLISHING AND ENHANCING
THE ONE FLESH RELATIONSHIP WITHIN MARRIAGE**

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The intent of this project was to establish the biblical and theological foundations of the one flesh relationship within marriage and to integrate these principles with the psychotherapeutic concepts of Family Systems Theory and Transactional Analysis. A careful discussion of marital models and family types was conducted. A biblical and theological model for marriage and family was established. Family Systems Theory and Transactional Analysis were carefully researched, analyzed, and appraised for their application by a counselor with a Christian worldview of marriage.

A family history of a Christian couple enrolled in marriage counseling was taken via intake interviews. Diagnostic tools such as the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, Kiersey Temperament Sorter, and a genogram were used to further assess the couple with specific attention placed upon personality development, generational behavior patterns, transactional schema development, and the development of dominant transactional ego states. After the couple was assessed, a plan for implementing Transactional Analysis was constructed and finally implemented.

The results of this project show that Family Systems Theory and Transactional Analysis can be utilized to assist in establishing and enhancing the one flesh relationship within marriage in accordance with the theological foundations for marriage as established by the word of God.

Chapter 1

Marital Models and Family Types

The purpose of this project is to establish the biblical foundation for marriage as a “one flesh” relationship and to integrate related principles with psychological and therapeutic concepts that would assist couples in their search for marital stability and fulfillment. Chapter one is a brief overview of various marriage models and family types and how they may apply any given marital situation. Chapter two seeks to establish the biblical and theological foundations of marriage and family with particular emphasis placed on the concept of biblical marriage and family being established upon the one-flesh covenantal relationship between husband and wife and then extending to the parent-child relationship. Chapter three is a summary of two significant therapeutic models: Family Systems Theory and Transactional Analysis with some dialogue as to how they would contribute toward the one-flesh concept in marriage. Chapter four is a detailed family history of a couple that this project was intended to assist in their marriage. It will include various modes of assessment and interpretation of those assessments as it relates to assisting in the diagnosis and treatment of the marital system. Chapter five is the actual unfolding of the counseling process with this same couple.

Marital Models

Without question there is not a shortage of marital models and types of families in society in general and in the American society in general. Researchers have formulated many models. Wallerstein and Blakesle note at least four of them:

1. Romantic: Romantic couples required the continuation of the initial romantic spark that brought them together. It is essential to maintain the level of excitement in the marriage, and in their case sensuality is at a premium and is a constant throughout the course of their marriage.
2. Rescue: The central theme of the Rescue Model is the attempt by one or both of the marital partners to heal or assuage the damage of a dysfunctional childhood or the hurt that resulted from a previous relationship. Many times this model can appear as a “rebound marriage or a remedy marriage”.
3. Companionate: Companionate marriages are based on mutual spousal interest and investment in the union and all of its facets. Each partner takes interest and places meaning on each other’s careers, relationship satisfaction, and the welfare of the children.
4. Traditional: The Traditional Model portrays husband and wife in the classical roles of breadwinner and homemaker respectively (Wallerstein and Blackeslee, 1995).

Herrington and Kelly (2002) identify five models:

1. Traditional: Partners have specifically defined roles that are apparent to each spouse either explicitly or implicitly. Equilibrium is maintained so long as each spouse maintains their role and is jeopardized if one spouse decides to alter his or her role. As long as both spouses are comfortable in their roles, these marriages maintain themselves quite well with an extremely low divorce rate.

2. Cohesive/Individuated: These couples practice a combination of an egalitarian ethos with intimacy, and thereby allow a great deal of personal freedom for each partner. Personal renewal, mutual affection and support, and companionship are important for these couples, whose marriages also enjoy a low divorce rate. Mutuality and egalitarianism are critical to these marriages. They are threatened when one spouse assumes a dominant role without the other spouse's consent.
3. Pursuer/Distancer: This is unfortunately the most common type of marriage. It features one spouse maintaining an aloof status while the other spouse desires increased intimacy. This model has a feeling of codependency where the aloof spouse knowingly or unknowingly presides over the intimacy needs of his or her partner. This model has the highest divorce rate.
4. Disengaged: These couples place a low priority on emotional intimacy and a great premium on personal independence. They can often be characterized as being functionally married but emotionally disconnected. They often experience an emotional divorce years before the legal dissolution of their relationship.
5. Operatic: Operatic relationships are characterized by violent swings on the emotional continuums. Heated arguments are often followed by passionate love-making. These emotional extremes render these relationships prone to emotional, physical, and even sexual abuse and therefore suffer high divorce rates (Herrington and Kelly, 2002).

Olson and Flowers (2003) conducted a national study of 6,267 couples and identified five distinctive types of marriages that reflect similar themes found in Herrington and Kelly's models. They are:

1. Vitalized Couple: This model represents the most actualized and happy type of couple. This is reflected by the highest scores on most aspects of their relationship. Communication is at the heart of this couple and this is reflected by their success in conflict resolution and sexual satisfaction. Only 14% of these couples ever considered divorce.
2. The Harmonious Couple: These couples are quite happy and quite stable. Only 28% have ever considered divorce. They do possess their own set of strengths but are not on the level with the vitalized couples. They demonstrate satisfactory levels regarding their role relationship, communication and conflict resolution.
3. The Traditional Couple: Traditional couples enjoy high levels of personal satisfaction and are designated as traditional because of the areas of their strengths which include: parenting and views toward children, family and friends, relationship roles, and conservative religious orientation. However, they generally score low on issues involving internal relational dynamics, personality issues, communication and conflict resolution. Many times in this couple one or perhaps both spouses quietly live their lives with unmet and unspoken intimacy needs. Over one third of these couples have considered divorce.
4. Conflicted Couples: Conflicted couples as their name suggests are unhappy and have numerous growth areas and very few relationship

strengths. Nearly 73 % of conflicted couples have considered divorce. They are designated as conflicted because they possess many areas of differences and disagreements while not possessing great communication and conflict resolution skills.

5. Devitalized Couples: These couples are extremely unhappy and have significant growth areas in virtually all aspects of their relationship. 70% classify themselves as being dissatisfied and over 90% have considered divorce. They have very few relational strengths and what strengths they may have possessed at an earlier point in their marriage have deteriorated over time (Olson and Flowers, 2003).

These marital types emerged from Olson and Flowers' study of 6,267 couples who each took the Prepare/Enrich Inventory. He mapped out the percentage of occurrence of each group in the sample. 12% of the couples were designated as being in the Vitalized group. Harmonious couples made up a slightly smaller section within the group at 11%. Traditional couples comprised 16% of the overall sample. The Conflicted and Devitalized groups were the most dissatisfied couples and were the largest sections within the entire sample group at 25% and 36% respectively (Olson and Flowers, 2004).

The fact that well over half of the sample report themselves to being quite unhappy in their marriage and very comfortable with the notion of divorce as the solution to their marital woes would indicate an alarming lack of satisfaction within today's marriages. 61% of the couples sampled are in the least satisfied groups and many of the Traditional couples also report high levels of dissatisfaction and would consider divorce if not pressed by cultural and religious constraints.

Jack and Judy Balswick (1999) identify three different models of marriage by utilizing the criteria of commitment, adaptability, authority, and communication as their classifying criteria. Their models are traditional, biblical, and modern.

1. Traditional Couples: These couples exhibit intense commitment to the institution of marriage. Sex is often seen as dutiful on the part of the wife and for the pleasure of the man. Relational roles are clearly defined and quite rigid. Man is the locus of authority while the woman is expected to be submissive to the authority of her husband. The man is the initiatory partner and the woman is in a passive and reactive mode.
2. Biblical Couples: Biblical couples demonstrate a commitment to the idea of marriage as a covenantal relationship with the husband and wife acting as mutual partners. Sex is defined as being for the mutual enjoyment and pleasure of each partner. The relationship is based on grace rather than the law, and relationship roles are interchangeable and flexible, depending upon circumstances. Authority is negotiated between the two partners and requires mutual submission and empowerment of each other. Communication is bi-lateral and consists of dialogue and negotiation. These couples enjoy a high level of security and are therefore free to be engagingly assertive with each other without fear. Active listening and a healthy respect for each other characterize these relationships.

3. The Modern Couple: Moderns see marriage as a contract with terms designed to guarantee self-satisfaction and fulfillment and that can easily be breached when one's person needs or expectations are unmet. Sex is self-centered and often used as a manipulative tool. Roles are not defined and are undifferentiated and so chaos so chaos reigns. Authority is built upon possessive power and control. Communication often takes the form of ultimatums and demands from one spouse to the other, which inevitably leads to greater conflict and a stalemate of wills (Balswick and Balswick, 1999). (See Table 1)

Taking all of these models into consideration, two models seem to emerge as legitimate choices for the Christian couple: Traditional or Partnership. Scholars such as Stephen Grunlan and Larry Christenson (1984) see these two models as being somewhat dichotomous. The Traditional model asserts that the husband is the unchallenged head of the household and the wife is to be submissive to his God-ordained authority. The Partnership model maintains that marriage should reflect shared authority and responsibility where power and influence are negotiated depending upon the circumstances (Grunlan, 1984).

Table 1: Traditional, Biblical, and Modern Marriages
(Balswick and Balswick, 1999, p. 85)

Traditional	Biblical	Modern
	Commitment	
Commitment to the institution of marriage. Coercive, dutiful sex. Pleasurable for husband.	Covenantal relationship between partners. Cohesive. Affectionate sex emphasizing mutual pleasure.	Contract relationship designed for self-fulfillment. Disengaged. Self-centered sex, personal pleasure.
	Adaptability	
Law is the norm. Predetermined, segregated roles. Rigid and unyielding.	Grace is fundamental. Creative interchange of roles. Adaptable and flexible.	Anarchy is the norm. Undetermined and undifferentiated roles. Chaotic and Confusing.
Ascribed Power. Authoritarian and dictatorial. Male focused leadership.	Empowering. Mutual submission with interdependence. Leadership is shared. Relationship-centered.	Possessive Power. Absence of Authority. Independent and self-centered.
	Communication	
Inexpressive. Fiats given by authoritarian. Nonassertive/Aggressive	Intimate. Discussion oriented. Mutual assertiveness. Negotiated.	Pseudo-intimacy. Demand followed by stalemate. Aggressive.

John Howell (1979) doesn't see the Biblical model of marriage in such dichotomous terms but rather sees it as existing in the form of a continuum with Traditional marriage on one end and Partnership on the other. This view allows for a dynamic flow along the continuum that will change and shift over time and allows for circumstances that may influence the couple toward one end of the continuum or the other. It also allows for the fact that while most marriages can be characterized as predominantly existing as Traditional or as a Partnership, they are not purely one or the

other. There are often elements of the Traditional marriage present within the Partnership model and vice-versa (Howell, 1979).

What are some conclusions that can be drawn from this examination of marriage models? First of all it appears that there is a definite correlation between the stability of a marriage and covenantal relationships that are founded upon mutuality, shared responsibility, negotiated relationship roles and effective communication. These relationships appear to empower both spouses while providing great flexibility and adaptability. There is no dominant and submissive partner, only mutually submissive partners who are sensitive enough and flexible enough to negotiate who should take the initiative when the situation arises. Secondly, it appears that although covenantal, partnering relationships are the ideal, it is not the only model that can provide for great stability and marginal levels of happiness. Traditional models have proven over time to be very stable provided that both the husband and the wife share the same opinion as to what is considered normative within their marriage. Traditional models work well until one member of the union decides that the marriage is not meeting his/her needs and feels the need for empowerment and self-actualization. At this point, the Traditional model becomes problematic because one spouse's concept of marriage has evolved into something other than what their partner has come to take for granted. In order for Traditional marriages to maintain stability, they must not incur a great deal of change as it relates to each partner's understanding of the marriage arrangement to the exclusion of the other. Therefore it can be said that although the Traditional model can prove to be stable over time, it can do so because its stability depends upon mutually acceptable rigidity. Thirdly, Modern marriages do not seem to provide the stability nor the vitality

of other models because they have become too open and loose in their organization. Modern marriages have too much independence without interdependence and because of this lose any semblance of order that would foster feelings of security and stability. In the end, it is apparent that the ideal model for marriage is that of covenantal partnership. But the challenge for the therapist would be ascertaining whether or not the couple can adjust their understanding to allow for such a model to exist. Some couples' exposure to marriage models are limited to the Traditional or Modern models. If the couples are not able to shift their paradigms of marriage to accommodate the Partnership model, the therapist may be left with the option of assisting them to make the best of the model that they are in, or at least to insert some aspects of the Partnership model that will alleviate some of the marital stress they are experiencing.

Family Types

There are diverse manners in which family types are described and defined. This discussion intends to provide a brief overview of some of the more common family types. Perhaps the most basic fashion in which family types are classified is to simply identify how many people compose the family's makeup and how they are related. Belkin (1987) defines a family as a group of people who are related to each other by a recognized legal process which establishes a consenting relationship via marriage or adoption, by blood ties via parent to child and sibling relationships, or by both (Belkin, 1987).

He specifies the following types:

1. Couple Family: The couple family is comprised of two persons who are legally married and reside in the same household. Most families can be

characterized as couple families at the inception of their marriage and then can return to this classification once all of their children have left the home. This post-children in the home status is also called the empty nest.

2. Blended Family: Blended families are couple families with two or more children in which at least one of the children is the natural child of both spouses and at least one child is the step-child of either spouse.
3. Single Parent Family: The single parent family consists of an adult parent, usually but not always the mother, along with a child or children.
4. Intact Family: The intact family consists of at least one child who is the natural born, adopted, or foster child of both members of the couple and there are no step-children in the home.
5. Extended Family: The extended family includes the nuclear family and the families of origin of both spouses and other related family members such as cousins, aunts and uncles.

Perhaps one of the most useful models available for assisting in understanding the nature and structure of families is the Circumflex Model of Marriage and Family Systems. Olsen uses the norms of closeness and flexibility to assess the nature and structure of the marriage, and the families of origin of both spouses. This assessment instrument enlightens the couple as to their strengths and growth areas within their relationship. They are able to understand the influence of their families of origin upon their current family. It is a dynamic model that provides a snapshot of the current status within their marriage and is therefore, not restrictive. It allows for growth and development as well as deterioration.

The counselor is provided with a history of the couple and notes their weaknesses and strengths. He or she will then be able to more properly diagnose their case and identify the areas that require the most acute attention.

As Olson defines it, closeness refers to the degree of emotional connection that exists within the family and between the spouses. He identifies five levels of closeness: disconnected, somewhat close, connected, very connected, and overly connected. For Olson closeness within a relationship is achieved by striking a delicate balance between separateness and togetherness given the particular circumstances of the moment within the marriage. Olson states that there are appropriate times in which couples can move between the two extremes but that couples who operate almost exclusively on the extremes tend to be unhealthy. Disconnected couples and families often experience unmet emotional needs while overly connected families run the opposite risk of becoming enmeshed and members lose their individuality and become overly dependent (Olson and Olson, 2000).

Flexibility is another important element that refers to a family's openness to change within their normative family structure and routine. These changes primarily involve transitions in leadership roles, relationship roles, and relationship rules. Olson suggests five levels of flexibility: inflexible systems, somewhat flexible, flexible, very flexible, and overly flexible. The goal as with closeness is to avoid the extremes and maintain a balance. Too much flexibility and the family can spiral out of control into anarchy and complete instability. Without stability, security is non-existent and without security and trust, intimacy can not be established and enjoyed. On the other extreme, inflexible systems tend to squash spontaneity and the dynamic factors necessary for

relationships to remain enjoyable and relationships become stagnant and often oppressive. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Five Levels of Flexibility: Balancing Stability and Change
(Olson and Olson. 2000, p. 147)

Inflexible System	Stability vs. Change	Unbalanced – very little change
Somewhat Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Balanced – some change
Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Balanced – moderate change
Very Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Balanced – considerable change
Overly Flexible System	Stability vs. Change	Unbalanced – a lot of change

Communication is a third and vital element. Communication is the “life-blood” of every aspect of the relationship because it is the common thread that runs throughout family relationships. There are three common styles of communication within family relationships: passive, aggressive and assertive:

1. **Passive Communication:** This style of communication emanates from an unwillingness to share one’s desires, feelings, or needs. The source of this passivity may be low self-esteem that results in an unwillingness to confront or hurt others. Passive communication leads to high levels of frustration and a lack of intimacy due to a lack of honesty and openness.
2. **Aggressive Communication:** Aggressive communication is characterized by someone speaking in aggressive, absolute statements

that are often accompanied by statements like, “you always”, or “you never”. This communication reflects a defensive behavior on the part of the person communicating and focuses on placing blame on others without accepting personal responsibility.

3. Assertive Communication: Assertive communication is a more positive form of communication that allows the participants to openly and honestly without fear, report their feelings, desires, and needs. It is the most direct and constructive form of communication.

By integrating these three factors of closeness, flexibility, and communication and mapping them on a continuum one is able to plot the present state of the couple's relationship and examine it in light of these three factors and their status in their respective families of origin. When couples begin to see this for themselves, they realize that their natural tendencies are to recreate the family systems from which they came or they will react against those systems and recreate the direct opposite of those systems to fill a perceived vacancy in their lives. Conflict arises when couples come from different family systems who don't share the same levels of closeness or flexibility and who don't practice the same communication styles and then are not able to adjust to the new family dynamics.

Jack and Judy Balswick (1999) concur that the factors of closeness, flexibility, and communication lead to a strong and stable family. Although they use slightly different terms such as cohesion, adaptability, and communication, these themes are very consistent with those discussed by the Olsons (2000). In addition to these themes the Balswicks go a step further to include the factor of Role Relationships or Role Structure.

More will be said about role structure in Chapter 3 when we discuss Family Systems Theory and Transactional Analysis, but it should be pointed out here that sound role structure with clear generational boundaries around the parental subsystem and child/sibling subsystem will contribute greatly to the overall strength of the family system (Balswick and Balswick, 1999)

Another way of examining families and determining types is to study them through the lens of developmental stages. Because the family and its composite relationships are dynamic, each developmental stage is characterized by a different task. The family unit and its members evolve as they progress through the developmental process and as they accomplish each task. Some tasks are specific to the particular state and time frame that the family is in and other tasks are more ongoing and are accomplished across the continuum of time. Movement between states and tasks are most clearly seen when the family undergoes major life transitions.

Jack and Judy Balswick (1999) identify seven distinct stages that each involve significant tasks that are to be accomplished along with initiating events that serve as triggers for the beginning of each stage (See Table 3). The first stage is known as the premarital stage. This stage is marked by an individual's differentiation of themselves from his or her family of origin and the development of their sense of self. Within this stage is another significant transition where two newly differentiated people begin making the transition toward marriage. Once this transition is made, the second stage known as the marital dyad begins. This is a critical state where two very different people from different family systems attempt to bring their lives together to merge them as one and begin to lay the foundation for their own family system. This stage is quite critical

for the remainder of their family's life because many of the family's core values, beliefs, practices, and modes of relating to each other will be established during this stage.

The third stage begins with the onset of children through the means of birth or adoption. This stage transforms the marital dyad into a triad. This transition can have powerful and lasting effects upon the marriage and developing family because of the adjustments that come with children. Researchers suggest that the best time for the birth of the first child should be between two and five years (Balswick and Balswick, 1999). Children who arrive prior to that time frame can come into a marriage that has not yet established itself as a dyad and those who arrive after that time frame can encounter a marriage system that has become less flexible to the demands that children can bring. The transition from the dyad into the triad requires enough stability between the spouses to accommodate for the new arrival but not rigidity that doesn't make room for the changes.

The fourth stage or completed family stage is marked by the birth or adoption of the youngest child. For families who only have one child, this stage may be eliminated. With the birth of each new child, new boundaries must be established, new space must be created, and new methods of relating are needed to accommodate this new member with their own unique personality.

The fifth stage is the adolescence stage of the children. This stage places increased pressure on the family system to be flexible and to allow for the hormonal changes and personality changes of maturing children. The maturation of the children and their initial differentiation from the marital dyad usually occurs at a critical time for the parents as they are dealing with their own transition into mid-life. With transition

occurring at both ends of the spectrum, this can be a highly explosive period if not handled with extreme care (Balswick and Balswick, 1999).

The sixth stage is known as the launching stage when children reach the stage in life when they choose their career path or marriage partner. This is a time of letting go for parents and an acceptance of the choices that their children have made regardless of whether or not they agree with them. This is a difficult transition for some parents that bring feelings of grief with the departure of children from the family home.

The seventh and final stage finds the family as a dyad again. The children have grown up and moved on into families of their own and the marital dyad is left with the empty nest. This stage can include great feelings of loneliness for couples who were highly focused on the children and neglected the marital dyadic relationship. For others this stage brings a tremendous sense of freedom and rejuvenation of the marital dyad where the couple is now more available to attend to the needs and dreams of their spouse.

Perhaps another stage could be added to the Balswicks' stages and that is the aging and death of one of the spouses. This is mentioned in part in the seventh stage but not dealt with fully. Aging and death is a stage all its own because it is a transition that signals yet another change within the family system. As parents age and move toward death, they are forced to cope with the limitations and challenges that aging can bring and the end of the dyadic relationship that comes with death. This stage also forces the children to assume the new role of caretaker for one if not for both of their parents. The death of a parent signals for the children the loss of a person that most significantly ties them to their identity. This is a difficult stage because in many ways it marks a transition that brings an end to the original nuclear family. It is sometimes accompanied by

extended periods of grief on the part of the remaining spouse and the children. It is a stage in the family development process that must not be overlooked or understated.

In an attempt to integrate both the marital models and family types that have been discussed in this chapter, it seems apparent that there are some recurring themes that lead to the stability of both the marital dyad and the family as a system altogether. For both the marital dyad and the family, open and honest communication is at a premium.

Without honest dialogue, the vulnerability that is required for intimacy needs to be met within the marital and familial systems will not occur. As a result, without open dialogue the stage is set for a lot of emotional repression, and an emotional buildup that will likely result in an explosive situation. Open and honest communication styles both within the marital and familial systems provide the best situation for strength in both systems.

In addition to communication, a proper balance between flexibility and structure within each system provides for freedom and security, order and empowerment to all of the system members. Just as rigidity and over-flexibility is harmful to the marital systems, the family system is also negative impacted by either extreme.

The final factor that is necessary for strength in both systems is the proper balance between closeness and differentiation or individuation. Just as each spouse needs to feel close to each other but with the freedom to maintain their own sense of self, children also need to have a sense of belonging to the larger family unit but also be empowered to individuate within proper boundaries at the appropriate stages of their development.

By examining the similarities that exist between the factors necessary for strong marital models and family types, it can be concluded that what is good for the marriage will be good for the family at appropriate stages of the family's development. The

foundational stones of communication, flexibility, and cohesion are transferable from the marital dyad to the completed family. What is also true is that if these stones are missing from the foundation in the marital dyad, there is a strong likelihood that they will not be developed in the family system. This fact gives credence to the notion that the Balswick's premarital and marital dyad stages are critical periods for the overall long-term health of the marriage and the family. It is the behavior norms and patterns that are established in these early developmental stages of the family that will set the tone for this family and the families that it will spawn in the next generation. Negative norms and patterns will translate to conflicted marital models and family types, positive norms and patterns will allow for a greater opportunity for strong marriages and families to emerge. Because of this fact, the church must place a greater priority upon educating and mentoring its young couples and prospective couples in the paths that are time tested and proven to produce strong, healthy marriages and vibrant, harmonious families. The future of our culture, society, and yes, even the church depends upon it. Without strong marriages and families, the church regardless of financial and people resources will not be strong and healthy and will not positively impact the world around it for Christ.

Table 3: Family Development
(Stages 1-7 are as stated by Balswick and Balswick, 1999, p. 44. Stage 8 is an addition made by this author.)

Stage	Major Task	Initiating Event
Premarital	Differentiating from family of origin.	Engagement
Marital-dyad	Adjusting to marital roles within the new household.	Marriage
Triad	Adjusting to the new child.	Birth or adoption of first child.
Completed family	Adjusting to new family members.	Birth or adoption of addition children to the youngest child.
Family with Adolescents	Increasing flexibility in family system.	Children's differentiation from the family.
Launching	Accepting the departure of family members.	Children's choosing career path and marriage partner.
Post-launching	Accepting the empty nest and the aging process.	Departure of last child from the home.
Senior Years	Accepting the aging process and adjustment to the death of a spouse/parent.	Chronic or life-threatening health issues associated with aging.

Chapter 2

Biblical and Theological Foundations of Marriage and Family

The purpose of this chapter is to formulate a personal biblical and theological orientation and foundation for marriage and family. By definition, philosophical and value statements derive their ideological underpinning from fundamental presuppositions. As a Christian counselor, it is critical that I be able to integrate my theological and therapeutic presuppositions regarding marriage and family so that I can minister to these systems in a congruent manner. This chapter will seek to articulate that integration process in a meaningful and useful way.

The fundamental presupposition that under-girds my understanding of marriage and family is the biblical concept of marriage as expressed in Genesis 2:24 that states: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” Jesus cites this text when preaching and teaching against divorce in Mark 10:7-8 and He adds the following commentary: “So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together let no man separate.” What does this mean? What are the implications behind this idea of two individuals being joined by God in a process that results in a one flesh relationship between the two that is overseen by God Himself? The most useful term throughout scripture that can be identified to describe this phenomenon of God overseeing the joining of two persons into one flesh is the term covenant. The remainder of this chapter will focus upon developing a theological system that further explicates this concept of covenant and seeks to integrate this concept within a therapeutic model of ministry.

A Theology of Marriage and Family

The relationship between God and the children of Israel has proven to be the most beneficial model for the construction of a theology of marriage and the family. God's establishment of His covenant with the children of Israel has become a model in developing a theology of marriage and the family. In his text, *On Being Human*, Ray Anderson (1982) utilizes this concept in constructing a theological anthropology. He does so by beginning with the biblical truth that "humanity is determined as existence in covenant relation with God" (Anderson, 1982, p. 37). He goes on to apply this concept of covenant to human relationships, namely those that exist between husband and wife and parent and child. He considers these familial relationships as secondary in order made possible by the primary order of differentiation as male or female. God's plan was to create humanity as male and female and His placing them into a relationship whose intent was to complete each other and complement each other's existence so as to achieve the His purpose of interdependence and cooperation between people. For Anderson, this interdependence is referred to as "co-humanity" (p. 52) and carries with it the notion expressed in Genesis 2 and again in Mark 10 of the two becoming one. The one-flesh relationship then becomes the foundational covenant that allows for the creation of all other relational covenants that exist within the family structure. The husband and wife covenantal bond and interdependence set the tone for the rest of the family unit.

Anderson and Guernsey further develop this concept of covenant as a paradigm for the family in another book, *On Being Family*. They describe covenant as the "unilateral relation established by God with His people Israel, through specific actions by which He summoned individuals and finally an entire nation into a history of response"

(p. 33). God is the initiating force behind the covenant and His initiation is motivated by His unconditional love for His children. For the basis of marriage and family to be nestled in the language of covenant, the same must be said for those relationships. The initiating force of covenantal relationships between husband and wife and parent and child must be unconditional love. Anderson and Guernsey write, “It is covenant love that provides the basis for family. For this reason, family means much more than consanguinity, where blood ties provide the only basis for belonging. Family is where you are loved unconditionally, and where you can count on that love even when you least deserve it” (p. 40). Given the fallen nature of humanity and its propensity toward sin and behaviors that often render it less than loveable, for familial relationships to withstand the onslaught of the world, the flesh, and the devil, they must then be grounded upon the foundation of covenantal unconditional love.

Theological Foundations of Family Relationships

Jack and Judy Balswick (1999) propose that there are four basic pillars that form the theological foundation for family relationships. They are sequential but non-linear stages known as: covenant, grace, empowering, and intimacy (Balswick and Balswick, 1999). The logical inception of every family relationship is a covenant commitment, which has unconditional love at its core. From unconditional love evolves grace, the kind which liberates family members to empower each other without regard for someone needing to earn their love or acceptance. From an empowered position, each family member is further liberated to be vulnerable to the point of self-disclosure and intimacy. Intimacy then leads back to a deepening of the initiating covenantal commitment. This

cycle is mirrored in the covenantal relationship that exists between God and His people. God initiates the covenant with His invitation to His people to enter into relationship with Him, a relationship that is established upon His unconditional love for them. Out of that unconditional love, comes grace, the unmerited favor of God that liberates humanity from the unrelenting and unsuccessful pursuit of God's favor according to the law. Being made free from the law of sin and death, we are made alive or empowered by God to live life in the Spirit thereby granting us the God-given ability and access to enjoy intimacy with God through a lifestyle of worship. This intimate fellowship with God only serves to deepen our commitment to the initiating covenant relationship. This understanding of the family relationships of husband and wife and parent and child have less to do with structure and more to do with family process. It is a dynamic evolution of the family process and not a static state of being that suddenly begins with the marriage ceremony. The prospect of covenantal love that proceeds out of the one flesh relationship between man and wife and extends from parent to child is an ongoing process and it finds its theological counterpart in the redemptive work of God with His people.

An excellent example of how the family process mirrors the redemptive process that exists between God and His people is the relationship that evolves between parent and child. The parent-child relationship begins as a unilateral love commitment from parent to child. Much like fallen humanity, the child is initially incapable of responding in a manner that acknowledges and accepts this love commitment and agrees to cooperate in a mutual relationship. But as the child grows and the relationship grows, the relationship transforms into a bi-lateral covenantal bond where two parties are mutually engaged. Relationship growth is dependent upon the mutual engagement of the two

parties concerned, and it can be blocked or impeded at any point when one party is unable to reciprocate the covenant love, grace, empowerment, or intimacy. In our relationship with God the growth of the relationship depends upon our willingness to continue to respond to God by acknowledging His initiation of the process and our realization that He will never recede from His commitment to the covenant. Growth in our relationship with God is dependent upon our unilateral reciprocation to God's initiative. Growth within family relationships is dependant upon bi-lateral reciprocation.

These four elements of family relationships are derived from a careful examination of the biblical teachings of how God initiates and maintains His relationship with humanity. The Bible teaches very clearly that God is a personal and social being who desires to have fellowship with humanity, and that He has created humanity to have intimate fellowship with one another. This is demonstrated in Christ's Great Commandment mentioned in Luke 10:27 when He condenses all of the law to the following statement, "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and your neighbor as yourself". If such a statement is a summarization of all of God's law, it can be deduced that God places tremendous emphasis upon relationships and the manner in which we operate within them. Our success in those relationships seem to hinge on how well we are able to foster the continuance of the process of covenant, grace, empowering, and intimacy leading toward a more mature relationship between husband and wife and parent and child.

Covenant Relationship: Starting the Process

Without question covenant is a biblical term and concept that often has seen its biblical meaning slighted by its being defined in contractual terms. The central theme of

covenant is that it is the initiation of an unconditional commitment by God toward humanity with God occupying the parental/initiatory role (McLean, 1984). The first biblical mention of the term covenant is found in Genesis 6:18, where God states to Noah, “I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark”. God goes on to tell Noah what He must do in order to enter into the covenant: “Take your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.” We discover in Genesis 6:22 that Noah did everything that the Lord had commanded him to do.

The second biblical reference in which God makes a covenant was with Abraham in Genesis 15:18. It is further explicated in Genesis 17:1-7:

The Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty. Live always in my presence and be perfect, so that I may set my covenant between myself and you and multiply your descendants.” Abram threw himself down on his face, and God spoke with him and said, “I make this covenant, I make it with you: you shall be the father of a host of nations, I will fulfill my covenant between myself and you and your descendants after you, generation after generation, an everlasting covenant, to be your God, yours and your descendants after you.”

Abraham’s role is explained in Genesis 17:9 when God said, “For your part, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you, generation by generation.”

There are a number of conclusions regarding covenant that can be deduced from these two biblical citations. First of all, in God’s initiation of the covenants with both Noah and Abraham, He did not offer either of them a choice in the matter. God’s establishment of the covenant with them was not based upon their response but rather upon God’s unilateral and unconditional love for them. God’s offer was in no way contractual and did not depend upon Abraham or Noah holding up their end of the bargain.

Secondly, the covenant itself was not conditional but the blessings or benefits that came with the covenant were. For Noah and Abraham to benefit from the covenant, they did have responsibilities to be fulfilled. God's love and His covenant were not conditional but the blessings of that covenant were.

Third, we also notice that God did not limit the covenant to just Noah and Abraham but He extended it to their descendants as well. God's covenant was an everlasting covenant and extended to all future generations of their families that were to follow. Neither Noah nor Abraham could guarantee the behavior or the response of their progeny to the covenant and this fact alone seems to solidify the unconditional nature of the covenant established by God.

The blessings of God's covenant were conditional on their descendants following God. The biblical and historical account of God's dealing with their descendants can best be illustrated with the phrase, "unconditional parental commitment" to a child. The Old Testament is replete with the description of the cyclical behavior pattern of Israel turning away from God followed by God's merciful efforts to turn them back unto Himself, forgiving them, reconciling them into the right relationship as it exists between a parent and their child.

Understanding that God's covenantal love and commitment to His children is unconditional and unilateral, attention now must be given to discussing covenantal love within the familial context of bilateral relationships. Balswick and Balswick (1999) point out that although covenantal relationships require an unconditional commitment, they can exist as either unilateral or bilateral commitments. They go on to label unilateral unconditional relationships as an initial covenant, and bilateral unconditional

relationships as a mature covenant (Balswick and Balswick, 1999). All biblical references to the covenants established by God are examples of initial covenants. In each of these cases it was God's intention that the covenant would be mutually reciprocated from His children and thereby become a mature covenant. God's desire is best illustrated by the process that takes place between human parents and their children. When a child is born, parents make unconditional, unilateral commitments of love to that child. At this point the child is unable to reciprocate that covenantal love with a commitment of their own back to their parents. However, as the child grows and develops, it is possible and desirable for the relationship to evolve into a mature, bilateral, and unconditional covenantal relationship. As unbelievers we are rendered by sin to be as unable to reciprocate the love of God as the newborn child is to return the love of his or her parents. But as we come to accept Christ and grow in grace, the relationship that was initiated by God's covenant with us develops into a mutual and mature relationship that becomes more rewarding for us and pleasing to God.

In order to illustrate the antithesis of initial and mature covenantal relationships within the family structure, we must note that there are family structures that demonstrate something other than unilateral or bilateral unconditional relationships. The modern or open arrangement would be illustrated by a person who enters a marriage with the understanding that as long as his or her needs are being met, the marriage can continue as planned. But if those needs or desires go unfulfilled, then the person is free to abdicate the marriage commitment. This type of attitude is characterized as being unilateral and quite conditional. If the attitude is shared by both marriage partners it then becomes a bilateral, conditional arrangement more commonly known as a contract. In this

arrangement, the commitment to the relationship is based on a system of quid pro quo and as long as each partner receives as much as they give, the marriage contract can be maintained. The problem with contractual marriages is that each partner has a way of perception that usually measures what they are contributing to the marriage more favorably than what they are receiving. Bilateral and unconditional covenantal marriages don't go to the trouble of measuring in the first place.

Grace: Forgiving and Being Forgiven

It is impossible to separate the unconditional love of covenant relationships from grace. In its very essence covenantal love is grace because it is derived from the unmerited favor of the one giving the love. By definition, God's unconditional love and commitment to humanity proceeds forth from His great goodness and not that of humanity.

As family relationships are designed by God to be lived out in covenantal terms, they are also divinely designed to exist and thrive in an atmosphere of grace and not law. Family life that is based upon contractual terms will lead to an atmosphere of law and scrutiny of everyone's behavior to determine who measures up and who doesn't. This leads to division within the family unit and eventual collapse. Family life that is based upon covenantal terms leads to an atmosphere of grace and forgiveness and will help to ensure a stable family system that can withstand the tests of life. Family life that is based upon law is antithetical to what it means to be a Christian. Our joy as believers is founded upon the fact that our relationship with God is based upon grace. This is much the same with our relationships within the family structure. At the corporate and individual levels, relationships based upon the law leads to legalism, but grace provides

deliverance from legalism. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:6 “it is the letter of the law that kills, but it is the Spirit that gives life.” The Spirit he is referring to, is the Spirit of grace.

Through the incarnation, God demonstrates His supreme act of grace toward humanity through the gift of Christ. Jesus came to earth in the form of a man to reconcile God’s wayward children to the Father. God’s love and grace for humanity is the fundamental basis for our ability to love and forgive others. We can forgive because we have been forgiven. Christ’s love in us becomes the reservoir out of which we can demonstrate love for others in an unconditional way.

The question is often asked, “Is there any place for law in family relationships”? The answer must be the same as the apostle Paul’s when he wrote that “Christ ends the law and brings righteousness for everyone who has faith” (Romans 10:4). As Paul stated elsewhere, it is not that the law is evil, it points the way to the only one who is able to keep the law and that is God Himself. Humanity can not keep the law, only Christ can, and we become righteous apart from the law through our faith in Him who kept the law in our behalf. Our salvation is not based therefore upon performance, but upon our faith in Christ and His performance.

The same can be said concerning family relationships. Scripture provides great insight into God’s ideal for family relationships, but none of us can fulfill that ideal. In a family based upon law, sinless perfection will be expected from every family member and the demands are usually made from an all-powerful autocrat who expects perfection from everyone else while exempted himself or herself. Rules and regulations are set up to govern behavior and relationships. This kind of pressure that is brought on with the

expectation for perfection gives way to an ever increasing guilt for failing to measure up to the expectations. This guilt diminishes self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy begin to surface. Family members begin to feel mounting resentment toward the family system. At best, they no longer try to measure up to the communicated standard of perfection. At worst, they choose to covertly or openly rebel against the system altogether.

Although the covenant of grace rules out law as the basis for family relationships, family members living in a grace system will accept law in the form of behavior patterns and norms, order, and responsibility in relationships. It is the law that provides the framework of our daily routine which is based upon agreed upon rules, regularity, and order. McLean's thoughts are helpful to illustrate this point:

In the covenantal root metaphor, law and covenant belong together. The dyadic relationship necessarily involves creating specific forms, rules, and laws to govern community and personal relationships. The need for law, pattern, and form is mandatory, but the particular shape of law needs to be understood as relative to the actualization of dialogical-dialectical relationships, the creation of whole persons-in-community. The issue becomes which forms, which laws, which patterns are appropriate to the maintenance of humanity? (McLean, 1984, p. 24)

From this we can determine that the presence of law, rules, and order in the context of a relationship that is based upon grace is for the purpose of bringing structure and safety within the family structure. Grace assumes that order and regularity are present for the expressed purpose that each family member's needs and their empowerment are provided for and not as a means for repressing them or restricting them.

Empowering: Serving and Being Served

Power is most often defined as the ability or capacity to influence another person. With such a definition in mind, the emphasis is placed upon the ability or potential of

influence, and not the actual exercising of the ability. Most research on the use of power within the family unit focuses on a person's attempt to influence or control the behavior of other's instead of their own. The assumption here is that the strong try to use their power to limit or minimize the influence or power of others as a method of securing their own influence within the family structure.

Empowering is a biblical model that seeks to use power in an entirely different manner. Empowering can be defined as using one's power in an attempt to serve another in a way that increases the power of the person who is being served. It is an attempt to establish power in another person. It does not mean that the person doing the empowering is yielding their power to the other person or giving in to their wishes. Instead, it is the intentional and active process of one person working to enable another person to acquire power and influence within the relationship.

Through empowering, family members are able to recognize their own strengths and potentials within. Their ideas and opinions are given an arena in which to be heard. Their overall personal development is encouraged and validated. It is the encouragement and affirmation of another's ability to learn and develop into the person that he or she was created to be. It may require that the empowerer be willing to take a step back and allow the empowered to learn by doing and not by depending. The empowerer must respect the uniqueness of those being empowered and see the strengths in their individual competence. In many ways empowering relationships are the precise opposite of co-dependent relationships. Co-dependency has an enabler that binds the enabled to the enabler in a way that increases the power of the enabler. The enabled in no way has the opportunity to discover and to develop into the person they were created to be. They are

bound to the defining power of their own dependence upon the enabler. In empowering relationships, the empowerer does not create a dependent relationship in the empowered but is rather seeking to create an interdependent relationship between two independently viable people that will be mutually beneficial.

If covenant is the love commitment and grace is the underlying atmosphere that spawns acceptance, then empowering is the action of God in the lives of His people. Jesus demonstrates this in His mission statement in John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”. The apostle John states it this way: “But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13 RSV). The power is not given by flesh or by the will of flesh but by God Himself. In so giving us this power, God sets the tone for empowering relationships that enable stronger parties to empower weaker parties to increase their ability to influence the relationship.

The power given by God is that of a personal order. Power is being mediated to the powerless. God in His infinite power is bestowing power upon the finite, who by their nature are sinful and powerless. By doing so, God, the powerful, enables humanity to change their condition and their nature to become His children. This is the ultimate demonstration of empowering within relationships.

Jesus redefined power by His teaching and by His relating to others as their servant. Jesus rejected the use of power to dominate others. He did not use His power to use others to fulfill His own personal needs. Instead, He affirmed the use of power to

serve others and to lift the fallen, to forgive the guilty, to encourage responsibility, and maturity in the weak. (Balswick and Balswick, 1999)

In a very profound sense, empowering is the demonstration of love in action. It is the mark of Jesus which family members need to imitate the most. The current secular view of power and authority within the family structure portrays power as a limited commodity which is to be struggled for and contended for. This mindset produces strife and division within families as family members jockey for position or seek to survive in a system where the power has already been consolidated by the most powerful member. Empowering eliminates this struggle for power altogether. It does so at the initiative of the strong using their power, their strength, to empower the weak and thereby create the window of opportunity for them to become powerful. There is no competitive struggle for supremacy but rather a cooperative spirit that is beneficial throughout the family system.

When thinking of parent/child relationships, power is often thought of as being in a limited supply. Power is many times thought of as existing on a continuum between parent and child and that as the child grows older the power of the parent decreases as the power of the child increases (Balswick and Balswick, 1999). The empowering approach to parenting recasts this system in an entirely different light by redefining the nature of power and authority. Parental authority is ascribed authority that doesn't come from a skill, strength, or personal achievement but rather emanates from out of the person. The biblical term for authority is *exousia* which means "out of one's being". The authority of the parent comes from their personhood.

Parents have authority that flows out of their personhood and it is demonstrated as they intensely care about their children's comprehensive development. The process of empowering children does not mean a concession of parental authority, nor does it imply depletion or a draining of power as they parent. What it does mean is that parents and children will enjoy a sense of personal power, self-esteem, and wholeness. The definition of successful parenting is the ability to move children along on a process of achieving personal power as they move along the pathway of maturity and self-sufficiency. Effective parenting is that which understands this process and appropriately empowers children as they develop with more opportunities to receive this power. Empowering in this parent/child relationship does not imply the reckless abdication of parental authority and freedom without restraint for they child. It does however mean that as the child matures and demonstrates greater responsibility with the power they have been granted, the parent can then further empower them to further develop. If the goal of parenting is to one day see the child move out of the nest and onto independent, self-sufficient adulthood, then empowering relationships are the best method of facilitating this process and meeting this goal.

Many times in response to the fear of what the child might become, parents are often tempted to keep the child dependent. This is often couched in the notion of doing so for the child's own good. Many times the child is kept dependent for the parent's own convenience and the consolidation of their control. Empowering the child is the ultimate goal, where the child is released to their own self-control. Of course mistakes will be made, but they can be minimized by the parent that empowers a child to make those mistakes at first within a safe zone to make them. In time the children won't require the

safety zone and can move on to full independence and self control. It is important to parents to remember that the key to their authority and influence is not their external control, but rather in the internal control which their children can integrate into their own personhood. True empowering occurs when the properly trained and empowered child of his or her own volition chooses the right course of action because within themselves they have grown to recognize it as the right course of action and they of their own accord choose it. As children mature and develop, the parent's ability to exert external control over a child will diminish, the only power that the parent will possess to influence the child to make the right decisions will come from the power that they have given the child along the way to develop into the person who will out of themselves make the right decision.

Intimacy: To Know and Being Known

Human beings are unique among living creatures in their capacity to communicate with each other through verbal and non-verbal language that provides the vehicle for humans to know each other intimately. Christian faith is distinct from Eastern religions in that we assert that God has broken into time and space for the purpose of personally relating to His creation. We know from scripture, that a fundamental purpose for God's redemptive activity within human history is to both know and be known by His creation. Scripture encourages us to share our deepest thoughts and intimations through prayer. We are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and prayer in the Holy Spirit for the expressed purpose of being able to effectively communicate to God even when we can not do so for ourselves (Romans 8:26-27).

In the garden Adam and Eve enjoyed complete and open communion with God. They were open and transparent before God and before each other. Sin had not yet corrupted their communion with their Creator and each other and they knew perfect intimacy in their personal relationships. It was not until after their sin, did Adam and Eve attempt to hide from God out of feelings of shame and exposure. Their sin also drove them to alienate each other in an attempt for self-preservation from the guilt of their actions. The intimacy that Adam and Eve enjoyed with God and with each other was without shame and had no room for pretense. It was open and honest. There was no need for games. But as a result of the fall the first couple and all of their descendants feel the need to cover up and this need is born from the shame of being known intimately.

What humanity lost with the fall in the garden is the pristine, innate ability to know and be known without shame or the need for covering up. This loss impacts the family system in that when shame is present, family members resort to playing deceptive roles with each other. When family members are less than honest, true intimacy or knowing and being known can not occur because what is being revealed is less than our authentic selves. This tendency was not intended by God in creation but has come about only as the result of human sin.

Members of a family based upon covenantal love and which lives in an atmosphere of grace and empowering will be able to communicate and express themselves in a manner that facilitates their knowing and being known by one another. Each member will make the concerted effort necessary to listen, understand, and want what is truly the best for the other. Differences will be accepted, valuing and respecting

each member's distinctive qualities will be a way of further empowering and confirming the other person.

Covenantal love, grace, and empowering create the arena where true intimacy can occur because they each address the sin-born tendency of humans to cover up and to deceive. If I am loved unconditionally, if I receive the space to be imperfect that grace affords me, and if I am empowered by others to be free to exercise my own power, then and only then am I free to be honest without fear of shame, reprisal, or retribution. In this context, trust is established, honesty is encouraged, and intimacy flourishes.

The capacity for family members to communicate feelings freely and openly with each other is contingent upon trust and commitment. Trust among family members pervades the system and system members do not fear that their shared vulnerability within the system will be exposed or exploited as a means of consolidating the power of another within the system. Then they are not afraid to share their feelings and thoughts.

John gives us insight into this phenomenon in I John 4:16, 18 "God is love... There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear". This brings us back to the unconditional covenantal love which is the foundation for family communication and honest sharing without the fear of rejection. As family members offer love unconditionally to each other, the security that is needed to establish deeper levels of intimacy is exchanged among members. Without this security, true honesty and openness will not occur and therefore true intimacy will not occur because what is being expressed and received through communication is not authentic but rather a masked or altered version of our true selves.

This unconditional love and subsequent intimacy is modeled by Jesus in His relationships in the system that existed among His disciples. At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus asked Peter not once but three times, “Do you love me?” Peter had earlier denied that he even knew Jesus three times. Jesus was affording Peter the opportunity to assert what he had previously denied and to reaffirm his love for Jesus. He was affording Peter the opportunity to be forgiven.

Because of our frailties as human beings, family systems will need to experience forgiving and being forgiven among its members. Being willing to admit mistakes and ask for forgiveness as well as admission of being offended and bestowing forgiveness will place family members in a position of vulnerability. When true intimacy is in place, this vulnerability is diminished because the possibility of being ashamed is minimal, and one can forgive and receive forgiveness and move toward reconciliation.

In this discussion of the biblical themes which have an influence upon the nature of family systems and their composite relationships, the following has been suggested: (1) commitment is to be based upon a mature covenant; (2) family life is to be established and maintained within an atmosphere of grace which embraces and embodies acceptance and forgiveness; (3) the resources of family members are to be employed to empower rather than to control one another; and (4) intimacy is based upon a knowing that leads to caring, understanding, communication, and communion with others within the family system. These four elements of Christian family relationships are a continually evolving process where each element can lead to deeper understanding and expression of the other elements. The end result of this system that perpetuates and sustains itself is deeper levels of communication and knowing within the family structure. If the goal of the

marital relationship is for the two persons to become one, not only will this process facilitate relationships within the family structure, but it will also provide the vehicle for the marital dyad to experience the fulfillment of its goal.

The Process of Becoming One

Anytime two persons from different backgrounds and with different emotional and psychological make-ups come together in a relationship as intense and demanding as marriage, one of the following four types of interaction is set in motion: competition, conflict, accommodation, or assimilation (Balswick and Balswick, 1999). It can be universally agreed upon that competition and conflict do not make for an environment that is conducive for two becoming one, but a discussion of assimilation and accommodation is needed.

Assimilation is a process in which two separate entities become one while accommodation is an agreement by two separate entities to be different. On the surface, it may appear that the biblical concept of one flesh may be assimilation, but upon further review this view is discounted. To illustrate this fact, one can look at the relationship of the believer becoming one with Christ in redemption and Christian maturity. Does the Bible mean to imply here that the believer stops being themselves and loses all sense of identity and personhood? Surely not! Although this may be the case in the thought systems of many of the eastern religions, being at one with Christ is not a complete dissolution of one's identity. Instead, in Christian thought being at one with Christ has to do with the rightness of one's relationship to Christ. We don't become Christ and Christ doesn't subsume our identities and become us. Being one with the Lord is relational.

Assimilation in marriage where one spouse loses their personhood is not Christian. Christian marriage is more like an accommodation where two people commit to the relationship and through covenant, grace, empowering and intimacy are able to maintain their distinctiveness but agree to come together in unity within the commitment. Assimilation assumes that one of the spouses forfeits their personhood in favor of the other person. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:21 points to a mutual submission of one to the other within marriage. In Christian marriage, each partner enters the covenant that assumes mutual and bilateral love and commitment, each partner gives and receives grace, each partner works to empower the other partner, and each partner is able to enjoy the benefits of marital intimacy. Accommodation allows each partner to fully express themselves within the context of a loving and accepting environment. Assimilation forces the subjugation of one's identity in deference to the other's identity. In this scenario, true intimacy isn't possible because honest personal expression is restricted.

In a practical way this can be demonstrated through the time honored candle ceremony that is included in many weddings. Some couples choose to extinguish the two outer candles that represented their lives prior to marriage as they light the center candle that represents their life together. This may seem romantic to the couple and to those in attendance but the symbolism of such a choice reflects something much like assimilation and therefore should be discouraged. A more correct symbolic gesture of the biblical concept of the one flesh relationship would be to light the center candle and leave the outer candles lit as well. A one flesh relationship is not the creation of a new reality that dissolves the personhood of one or both of the individuals. It is rather the creation of a new reality that includes the full expression of both partners in a covenant bond that

assures that each person will maintain their personhood and will be unconditionally loved by the other person as long as they both shall live.

Chapter 3

Family Systems Theory and Transactional Analysis

Family Systems Theory

Family Systems theory is a recent approach of psychotherapeutic intervention that has made tremendous progress in recent years due to a holistic approach that treats the family as a system. In the first part of this chapter Family Systems theory will be discussed in great detail with some detail placed upon its practical application. The second portion of the chapter will be dedicated to focusing on a discussion of Transactional Analysis and its application to marriage and family issues.

As was stated earlier, Family Systems theory presents a form of psychotherapy that seeks to address problems by extending analysis and treatment beyond the identified person to the family system that he or she represents. Its goal is to identify and alter maladaptive and repetitive behavior patterns within the family system by exerting leverage at the proper points within the system. This leverage will begin to influence change within the system and will consequently alter the relational patterns that have developed within the system that have heretofore contributed to the problems. In this practice, the entire system as well as its individual components will experience change (Corsini and Wedding, 1996).

Descriptive Literary Survey

Family Systems theory is considered one of the most popular treatment modalities within the field of modern psychology. It is a broad field with a variety of nuanced

approaches, each containing its own set of assumptions and presuppositions and epistemologies.

One of the more widely noted family systems theories is the Structural theory as developed by Salvador Minuchin. Structural theory as its name purports emphasizes the structural elements of the family with its organizational structure, power, alliances and boundaries. Conflicts and corresponding adjustments are characterized within terms of the adaptation of family members to internal and external sources of stress. Belkin (1987) points out that dysfunctional behavior patterns on the part of individual family members and the entire unit often arise as a result of boundary disputes (Belkin, 1987).

Another model to be considered is the Strategic approach as outlined by Jay Haley. This approach goes one step beyond viewing the family as a single system and instead looks at it as a system with multiple subsystems within the larger system. Each family member when combined with one or more other family members within a relationship(s) comprises a subsystem. A technique used in this approach employs a dynamic feedback system that enables the therapist to recognize communication problems that exist within subsystems that contribute to the overall maladaptive behaviors that are going on within the larger system (Belkin, 1987).

The Behavioral model as constructed by Gerald Patterson and John Gottman relies on analyzing individual behavior patterns within the family systems and identifies corresponding behaviors from other family members as reinforcements of those behaviors. It relies on empirical research to identify both the initial and responsive and reinforcing behaviors and the continual management of the outcomes of the behaviors (Belkin, 1987).

Nathan Ackerman is considered by many to be the father and founder of the Psychodynamic model within family systems theory. His model is constructed on the foundation of psychoanalysis, with a special emphasis placed upon the development of the infant ego within the context of the family system. Ackerman focuses on conflict as part of the organic structure of all families, and that the successful resolution of conflict within the system leads to the successful development of each system member. This model treats the family as an individual unit, and the emotional health of each member within the unit is a direct by-product of the overall health and functionality of the family system (Belkin, 1987).

Bormery-Nagy and Bowen view human behavioral problems within an even broader context than the nuclear family to include a multi-generational context. In many ways this theory expands builds upon the subsystem theory by saying that there are subsystems within the family system and the family itself is a subsystem within a larger multi-generational system. In this approach behaviors are not only reinforced by other members of the family system but have been reinforced through generations of family history (Belkin, 1987).

The distinction of family systems theory is that it does not treat the individual but rather focuses on the system. Feldman (1961) defines it as follows:

Conjoint family therapy in which two or more members of a family meet with one or more therapists...No attempt is made to differentiate between the goals of family therapy with groups of families, single families, multi-generational families, marital couples, and individuals (pp. 103, 105).

Another writer describes family systems therapy as a form of intervention in which family members are assisted in identifying and changing problematic, maladaptive,

self-defeating, repetitive relationship and behavior patterns. The IP is not viewed as the only person with the problem within the family system but rather as the family member who most expresses the family's disequilibrium and dysfunction. Therefore, change and healing doesn't come about through treating the individual expressing the symptoms but by treating the family system that is producing or reinforcing the behaviors that bring about the symptoms. Changing the system will impact the functioning of the individual as well as the entire family system (Corsini and Wedding, 1996).

Bowen defines five basic concepts that help in understanding family systems. They are: the identified patient, homeostasis, the differentiation of self, the extended family field, and emotional triangles. These concepts are more fully defined by Edwin Friedman (1985). As was stated earlier, the term identified patient or IP is used to identify the family member who is exhibiting the obvious symptoms. This person is not seen as merely the "sick one", but as the one who is visibly and audibly expressing the stress of the family unit (Friedman, 1985). Friedman expands on this concept of the IP by stating that successful treatment should not necessarily be pursued by focusing on the member who is exhibiting the symptoms but rather by focusing on the member who has the greatest capacity to produce change within the system. That person may or may not be the IP. Friedman (1985) calls this capacity to produce change, leverage.

Friedman goes on to define Bowen's concept of homeostasis as the tendency within family systems that causes the relationships within the system to perpetually self-correct in an effort to preserve their existence and that of the status quo. In light of homeostasis, problems within the family system are not merely seen as individual

problems that need to be corrected, but rather as factors that introduce imbalance to the system and if left uncorrected can lead to dysfunction (Friedman, 1985).

The fundamental assumption of family systems theory is that individuals are not simply isolated islands that are removed from any sort of connection with the islands around them. Every human being is connected to and in relationship to a larger system or systems. With this as the fundamental presupposition, the next presupposition is that comprehensive understanding and treatment of individual behavioral problems can not be treated without understanding and treating the system from which they come. The family is a system of connected and interrelated parts. Treatment within this system of thought depends upon how well the therapist is able to accurately assess the past and current relationship and behavior patterns, locate the points of leverage, and prescribe the appropriate action within the system to bring about the desired change.

Corsini and Wedding (1996) view the family system from a different vantage point. Rather than focusing on homeostatic tendencies within the system, they focus on the family as a dynamic structure that organizes and at times reorganizes or adapts itself over time. For them the concept of a system suggests that there are units within the system that organize themselves around some form or forms of relationship. The system itself is always greater than the sum of its parts. Understanding how the various parts interact and interrelate to each other is critical to understanding the overall organization structure and function of the entire system. Any change that is introduced by any part or unit of the system will in fact alter the operation of the entire system. This is why family systems therapists believe that individual treatment of family members apart from the

system will only serve to reveal a slice of the larger systemic problem. Individuals can not be adequately assessed and understood in isolation from the family system.

A third concept that Bowen and Friedman spend a great deal of energy defining is the differentiation of the self. Differentiation refers to the capacity of a family member to define his or her life's goals, agendas, and feelings apart from the surrounding pressures to be defined by the family system. It also suggests the ability to maintain a non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems and to take maximum responsibility for one's own destiny and emotional being. Differentiation means the ability to be an individual while remaining connected with the system. The direct opposite of the differentiated self is the enmeshed self. The enmeshed self is totally defined by the surrounding system and it is represented by the person who always looks to the system in order to be defined, directed, and defended. Conflict within enmeshed systems often arises when one or more than one member attempts to differentiate themselves (Friedman, 1985).

The fourth concept is the extended family field. This idea deems the entire extended family over generations as important as the immediate family of origin. Through careful examination of the extended family field via tools such as the genogram, behavior patterns as well as perceptions regarding issues such as sex, money, and health can be recognized for their recurrence within the greater family system. This is helpful for the therapist at understanding the etiology or pathology of current behaviors. Friedman (1985) notes that when individual family members are able to see beyond the limits of their own nuclear generation, they are able to obtain perspective of their problems and are thereby liberated to make decisions for change.

The fifth and final concept to be examined is the emotional triangle. The basic notion is that when two people begin to experience conflict they often will triangulate a third person into their relationship as an attempt to stabilize their own relationship with each other. Another reason for the involvement of a third person is that one or both of the original dyad involves them as a means of gaining an ally or an arbitrator between them that will view the relationship in their favor (Friedman, 1985).

Modalities of Healthy Family Systems

Perhaps the most helpful outcome from the study of family systems was the new appreciation for what constitutes healthy family systems. It isn't difficult to locate research that describes all of the abnormalities and dysfunctional patterns within family systems, but people want to know what constitutes strengths within family systems. This desire is perpetuated by the notion that weak families can work to improve their family system if they can locate their areas of strength and then develop strategies that will build on those strengths.

With locating strengths in mind, a number of researchers such as Stinnett, Curran, and Youngberg have been able to isolate a fairly universal set of strengths that seem to characterize strong, healthy family systems. First of all, strong family systems tend to exhibit behaviors that routinely express appreciation and affection toward each other. They are caring, kind, respectful, playful, humorous, and they genuinely enjoy one another's presence. Most of them place a strong emphasis on the maintenance of their spiritual well-being. They share similar ethical and moral views. They exercise their faith and they are intricately involved in a larger faith system or community of faith.

Members of these family systems understand and accept differences within the family. They are sensitive to each others' feelings and they are aware of the relationship roles within the family. There is positive and open communication among the members. They strive for consensus rather than winning or not losing. They sometimes agree to disagree. They are usually in good physical condition. They have a positive attitude and they know how to relax. They are not prone to vices. They enjoy high levels of interpersonal intimacy. They are authentic and have genuine relationship within the family. They are financially stable. They are faithful to God and the church. They manage stress and crises in a way that contributes to their overall closeness. They are committed to family above their careers. They demonstrate unconditional love for each other.

Jones and Butman (1991) provide another list of family strengths in their book *Modern Psychotherapies*. The list is summarized as follows:

1. Strong and healthy families respond positively to challenges and crises. They draw upon their mutual reservoir of resources and coping mechanisms. When they are unable to adjust internally, they seek outside help.
2. They have a clearly articulated worldview that is often expressed in terms of a specific religious commitment.
3. They communicate well. They practice active listening skills. They affirm and support each other, expressing thoughts and feelings. They manage and resolve inter-family conflicts.
4. They choose to spend time together in a variety of tasks and activities. They enjoy both working and playing together.

5. They make promises and honor commitments to one another. They take their marriage and family responsibilities and commitments seriously.
6. They are adept at expressing love and appreciation for each other. They are caring, compassionate, respectful, tolerant, and trusting.

From a careful examination of both lists, it is not a tremendous ideological leap to say that there is a tremendous connection between these strengths and the theological foundational principles of covenant, grace, empowering and intimacy discussed in chapter 2. If a family system is based upon the mutual and bilateral unconditional love of covenant, extends grace and forgiveness among its members, empowers its members, and results in high levels of intimacy among its members, it will develop and demonstrate the types of strengths listed above.

Models of Abnormality

The problems faced by the family are numerous and diverse in their nature. It seems that all families, even the families who exhibit many of the strengths that were listed in the previous section, are afflicted with some form of abnormality. From a theological standpoint, this can be understood as the result of the sin of our cosmic progenitors, Adam and Eve and the subsequent fall of humanity. Just as there are strengths that pervade what can be considered strong and healthy families there also exists a recurring group of problems that are pervasive in what can be described as dysfunctional families. At the core of these recurring problems is a fundamental lack of communication skills and from that lack proceed a communicative dissonance between

members of the family system. This dissonance is often characterized as a incongruence between communicated pronouncements and actual behavior (Jones and Butman, 1991).

Enmeshment and disengagement are significant challenges that exist within dysfunctional family systems. These problems tend to occur in families that have difficulty defining and observing proper boundaries within its composite relationships. Family systems with somewhat obscure or blurred boundaries usually exhibit high degrees of enmeshment where its members are overly involved with one another. This is usually characterized by an emotional overdependence upon each other and the members feel as if they can not live independently of the system. Even when they get married, members feel unable to alter their level of enmeshment with the family of origin and this inability to do so can cause stress in their new family. Another stress that can occur within enmeshed families is when one member attempts to differentiate themselves from the system and the system is unwilling or unable to cope with their differentiation. Feelings of emotional abandonment and betrayal often set in and if this differentiation occurs as a result of marriage, the family member's spouse is often seen as the one who has taken the member away from his or her family of origin. Enmeshment generally occurs within families that are quite rigid in structure and do not have an empowering atmosphere.

Disengagement is a problem that exists within families that exhibit too much flexibility within the system and members are so emotionally disconnected from each other that each person seems to live in his or her own world. On the surface it appears that the members of disengaged family systems don't really care for each other. Either extreme whether enmeshment or disengagement, present families with great problems.

Antisocial behaviors, eating disorders, psychosomatic illnesses, substance abuse, and relationship role problems are often associated with enmeshed or disengaged family systems (Jones and Butman, 1991).

Individuation or differentiation always involves a process that requires patience and understanding on both the part of the individual and the system that surrounds it. The cortex of this process revolves around individuation and connection. How does one become who God created them to be as an individual and yet maintain connection with the family system? To err on either extreme presents its own unique set of problems. To err on the side of hyper-individuation could render the individual as disengaged and disconnected with the family system altogether. This often causes feelings of alienation and misunderstanding to take root within the individual and the system and in many ways seems like a death has occurred within the system. Others tend to err on the side of hyper-connection, and they often find themselves enmeshed and unable to live their own lives. The key seems to be found in the individual and the system being able to strike an appropriate balance between the two extremes.

Whenever there is tension within a system that is struggling with these issues, there is a locus of pressure within the system. This pressure is often expressed through one or more of the family members who are reflecting this pressure as dysfunction or distress while the system is trying to restore equilibrium. The symptomatic family member could be a fearful child, an adolescent who is struggling with a variety of issues such as eating disorders, cutting, truancy, etc, or a spouse who is struggling with the control of their appetites such as alcohol, food, or sex (Jones and Butman, 1991).

A Brief Critique of Family Systems

Family systems is a rather broad and involved field and therefore any criticism of the field will need to be limited to the scope of its foundational principles that are somewhat universally held within its many schools of thought.

It is a fundamental tenet of systems thinking to assume that people's behavioral problems exist within the broader framework of their family systems. This is a statement that for the most part can receive universal assent. We are not islands unto ourselves and to a great degree we are influenced by those who have had the most impact in our lives, our families. However, with this in mind it is important to recognize that the impact of the family system upon the individual in no way excuses them from personal responsibility. Systems therapists who allow themselves to see the family and its influence as overly deterministic can many times excuse individual behavior as merely an unconscious result of living within a particular system. When this occurs individual members are not confronted with the fact that they need to take responsibility for themselves in order for a redemptive change to occur within the system. The impact of the family system upon individual behavior and mental health can sometimes be overstated if it is done so from a deterministic point of view.

Secondly, like most other psychological systems, family systems therapy is rather humanistic. It does not take into account the spiritual dimension of humanity as it relates to the sinful condition, the presence of evil within the world, and it often sees the behavioral choices of individuals as the only means to bring about redemptive change. It often assumes that simple behavior changes are all that are necessary to solve the problem, and it ignores the spiritual component of the problem. Using a systems

approach with an acute sensitivity to the spiritual dynamics at work, might be more effective in bringing about desired change.

Systems therapy also presents logistical and educational problems because the therapist is attempting to educate all members of the systems to see the problems as systemic when most people operate on an individualistic basis and see the world through their own eyes. It requires a great deal of effort to help people to change their point of view and see problems as systemic rather than individualistic.

Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis is considered by many to be a most affective strategy for treatment within a group context such as the family system. Many of its elements find great facility in working with marriage and family issues, and this is so because most of its fundamental methodology revolves around the examination of interpersonal interaction between close associates. Transactional Analysis is considered by many to be both a theory of personality and a system of therapy for human interactions (Corey, 2004).

Transactional Analysis is also portrayed as a communication theory as well as a method for analyzing systems and organizations. Salvatore Maddi classifies Transactional Analysis as part of the conflict model of human personality and the psycho-social vision. Elements of other psychological constructs such as the Psychoanalytic model of Id, Ego, Superego Psychology, and Object Relations theories can be readily seen within Transactional Analysis thought and practice.

History

Eric Berne is widely considered as the father of Transactional Analysis. He was a Freudian psychoanalyst by training who overtime became somewhat disillusioned with the classical psychodynamic model due to the fact that it was so slow in helping people resolve their problems. He also felt that its complexity and inaccessibility to clients was a weakness of the approach in that it prohibited clients from gaining insight that they could understand and utilize in the course of their treatment. Due to Berne's psychoanalytical roots, many consider Transactional Analysis as a variant or an extension of Freud's method, but with the caveat that it was more applicable to the group setting. After enjoying significant success with Transactional Analysis, Berne made a complete break with his psychoanalytic training to devote himself completely to the theory and practice of his breakthrough method (Corey, 2004).

Berne published eight major books during his lifetime. The following is a list of those works:

- *The Mind in Action* (1947)
- *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis* (1957)
- *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* (1961)
- *Structure and Dynamics of Organization and Group* (1961)
- *Games People Play* (1964)
- *Principles of Group Treatment* (1966)
- *Sex in Human Loving* (1970)
- *What Do You Say After You Say Hello* (1972)

When Berne made his break from Freudian thought, he did so by emphasizing what he termed, “structural analysis,” in which he postulated the triadic nature of human personality: child, parent, and adult. The child state involves an un-socialized appreciation and expression of the physiological process. The parental state is an internalized representation of taboos that are sometimes learned through interaction with one’s parents. The adult state represents the state where rational, evaluative thought occurs (Maddi, 1996). Many have drawn comparisons between this triad and Freud’s id, ego, and superego, but Berne maintained that there was a distinction and he makes his distinction based upon two arguments. First of all, Berne argues that his constructs readily apparent and observable in personal experience while Freud’s were mere theoretical constructs that were difficult to observe and define. Secondly, Berne states that Transactional Analysis makes little use of the unconscious where as Freud’s approach is entirely consumed with the unconscious. Maddi (1996) points out that while Berne does avoid using the term unconscious or subconscious, he does employ a parallel term, seclusion that bears great similarities with Freud’s concepts of repression, denial, and unconscious thought.

Although Berne discounts Freud’s influence upon Transactional Analysis, it is apparent that there are tremendous similarities between the two schools of thought. But over the course of time, Berne and his followers have so refined many of the concepts within Transactional Analysis that it appears the movement has moved further from its Freudian moorings. Maddi (1996) suggests that the most substantive break with psychoanalysis can be found in Berne’s deemphasizing the influence of unconscious drives and needs and emphasizing more social and inter-relational matters.

In the early 1950's Berne and his associates began holding regular clinical seminars, and in 1958, these seminars evolved into the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars, which met weekly in Berne's house. This meeting would become the seed bed for the emerging tenets that would make up Transactional Analysis. The members who comprised these meetings would become the figures who would expand Berne's thought and become well-known proponents of various branches of Transactional Analysis. Clinicians such as Claude Steiner, Jack Dusay, Steven Korpman, and Franklin Ernst made up the classical school; Jacqui Lee Schiff, cofounder of the Cathex School of Transactional Analysis; and Robert Golding and Mary McClure who became leaders in the Redecision school made up these rather austere meetings (Dryden, 1996).

The three schools mentioned above comprise the major schools of thought within Transactional Analysis. The differences among the three schools lie more in their emphasis and interpretation and in their different contributions to theory and practice rather than what the clinicians have contributed to Berne's system. All three schools hold in common what is considered to be standard theory and practice of Transactional Analysis as a discipline. The theoretical underpinnings of each of the three schools rest upon Berne's fundamental concept of ego-states and script. All three schools utilize the contractual method.

As its name suggests, the classical school remains the closest and most authentic representation of the thoughts and concepts expressed by Berne. Its proponents have of course made their own significant contributions to the base thought proposed by Berne. Classical Transactional Analysis proponents choose to focus upon the establishment and

cultivation of an adult-adult alliance as a means of decontaminating the adult. This school favors group therapy as opposed to working with individuals (Dryden, 1996).

The Redecision school was founded by Robert Goulding and Mary McClure. Their approach is a combination of the theory and the practice of Transactional Analysis and Gestalt Theory. Their theory entails assisting the client in making conscious decisions from both the child and the adult states. In order to initiate this process, Gestalt techniques such as the action and feeling oriented techniques are used in combination with the cognitive Transactional approach. The Redecisionist invites the client to put the two states in conversation with each other about a given issue with the objective being solving the conflict and moving on. A central tenet in Redecision thinking is to connect an emotional release with a cognitive analysis. It is a way of connecting intellectual and cognitive insight with the emotional energy needed to make a change in behavior. Redecision therapy is primarily done on an individual basis (Dryden, 1996).

The Cathexis Schiffian school was founded by Jacqui Lee Schiff. Schiff's interest in Transactional Analysis primarily surrounded her use of it in working with schizophrenics. Her theory assumes the premise that, when in script, the patient distorts his or her perception of the self, others, and the world to fit the belief constructs of their script. This is an unconscious process carried on within their mind. The Schiffian theory is that this distortion of perception emerges from the destructive and damaging messages that form the content of the client's parental ego state. The remedy for these distortions can be found in decommissioning the parent and replacing it with healthy and constructive new parent messages. The role of the clinician is to assume the role of the new parent and to communicate new messages for the client as the client grows up. The

developmental thrust of this branch of Transactional Analysis is quite clear. The clinician essentially assists in the age regression of the client and re-parents them with a newer and healthier parental model that can form the basis of their new and improved parental state. This form of therapy is called radical-reparenting (Dryden, 1996).

Other writers have charted Transactional Analysis through four distinct phases. The initial phase began in 1955 with Berne's discovery of his ego states. The two key works that can be cited during this phase are: *Games People Play* (Berne, 1964) and *I'm Okay You're Okay* (Harris, 1969). These two works are really the seminal works that propelled Transactional Analysis into being one of the dominant self-help psychological approaches of the 1970's. Phase two which took place during the mid-1960's moved away from the ego states established in Berne's earlier writings and focused more on relational games. The third phase which transpired in the late-1960's placed more emphasis on script analysis. During this era, techniques for analyzing, understanding, and altering scripts were developed and put to use in the clinical setting. The final phase of Transactional Analysis featured the work of Goulding and Redecision therapy. As was stated earlier, this therapy involved the replacement of old and negative scripts with newer and more functional ones by a cognitive reconsideration of old scripts and a corresponding Gestaltic, emotional release.

Theoretical Fundamentals

The underlying fundamental premise of doing effective Transactional Analysis in a group setting is to build and maintain a high level of personal and systemic awareness within the group. It is the goal of the group leader or clinician to raise this awareness to problems within the group and to encourage their exploration of their options for change.

Transactional Analysis also operates under the premise of personal responsibility for the way we feel, think, and behave. Therefore, it is the goal of the leader to get each member of the group to take responsibility for themselves, the way they function within the group, and the level of influence they possess in making the group function in a more constructive and beneficial way. Transactional Analysis at its core is really about raising people's personal awareness of their problems and the factors at work behind the problems and then taking an intentional approach at correcting those problems instead of drifting along in an unintentional and passive manner (Corey, 2004).

This system of therapy is very much suited for application within family systems. As family members interact with each other, they reenact or relive some of the basic transactions that characterize their relationships, and this reenactment is very insightful for pointing out destructive patterns that result in the problems that are surfacing within the system.

One of the key concepts in Transactional Analysis is the expression, "I'm okay – you're okay." This phrase reinforces the position that all persons have value and inherent worth and are capable of change, growth, and healthy relational interaction. Transactional Analysis sees this phrase as the embodiment of the ideal state of mind in order to be growing as an individual. Corey (2004) notes that "this life position is characterized by an attitude of trust, openness, willingness to give and take, and an acceptance of others as they are. People are close to themselves and to others. There are no losers, only winners" (p. 344). This concept seems to lend itself to the theological premises of covenant, grace, empowerment, and intimacy mentioned in Chapter 2. It allows for the bi-lateral mutuality of covenant, the acceptance of grace, the win-win

possibility that comes with empowering relationships, and the closeness found in true intimacy.

In contrast, the “I’m okay and you’re not okay,” position the stance of people who have concluded that they are the only sane and well-adjusted people within the system and as a result, they project their problems onto others. They forgo accepting personal responsibility for their situation and they blame and criticize others as a means of helping them to feel superior. To remain in this position completely undermines any possibility to experience productive change within the family system.

The opposing position to this is “I’m not okay and you’re okay”, and it is known as a depressive position and is characterized by feelings of powerlessness in comparison with others. People in this position assume the role of victims within relationships. They play the “kick me” or martyr games that reinforce the power and control of others over their lives (Corey, 2004). This position assumes too much responsibility for what is going wrong within the family system and they often downplay their influence and resourcefulness in bringing about change. In a way this person needs to be empowered but the challenge will be for them to receive the power once it is given to them.

These positions from which we live our lives are not static positions in which we occupy a single position in all of our transactions. Corey (2004) states that we can transfer in and out of these positions and that we have a favorite position in which we return to in time of stress. The aim of Transactional Analysis is to awaken the client to their particular life position and create alternative positions that are more positive and growth inducing and which also contribute to the health of the family system.

Related to life positions is the life script. This is a second key concept in Transactional Analysis that is somewhat fundamental. The life script as its name suggests is an unconscious life plan or template that governs the way we live our lives. It projects the way we will respond in a given situation or circumstance. This script is formed in early childhood and is related to how a child perceives himself or herself and how they are treated by others. It is dramatically shaped by the child's parents and the early decisions that they make. In many ways it forms a blueprint for life that prescribes the path that people will assume in life and what they will do when they get there (Corey, 2004).

Another important fundamental concept of Transactional Analysis is the ego state. Berne defines the ego state as, "Phenomenologically...a coherent system of feelings related to a given subject and operationally as a set of coherent behavior patterns or pragmatically as a system of feelings which motivates a related set of behavior patterns" (Berne, 1961, p. xvii). Berne describes the term ego state as being "states of mind and related behavior patterns as they occur in nature" (Berne, 1972, p. 11).

According to Berne, each human has the capacity for exhibiting three types of ego states. The first type is derived from parental figures and is known as the parent state. In this state, the person feels, thinks, acts, talks, and responds as one of his parents did when they were little. This state influences the way that we raise our own children and often performs the function of conscience (Berne, 1972). The parent ego state is subdivided into two states – the critical controlling parent and the nurturing parent. The positive aspect of the controlling parent can provide structure that is needed for the success of the individual. The negative impact is a hyper-critical parent who stifles or discounts the

value of the child ego state in others. The positive aspect of the nurturing parent ego state is to affirm and support; the negative aspect tends toward permissiveness (Corey, 2004).

The second ego state is called the adult. This is where a person uses reason and mature judgment based upon past experiences to act and react. The adult ego state is often characterized as a computer-like state, for in it, a person collects and stores data, and makes decisions based upon that data. The adult state is the cognitive thinking state oriented toward current reality. The adult is necessary for survival and regulates the activity of the parent and the child and mediates objectively between them (Berne, 1964).

The third state is the child, and this state should not be confused with childishness or immaturity. It is childlikeness. This state can be subdivided into three states: the natural, the adapted, and the rebellious child (Berne, 1972). The child state is often seen as the source for playfulness and creativity, recreation, and even procreation. The problem occurs when the child ego state is exhibited in situations that call for the parent or the adult state. If a person is arrested within the child state, they are often prone to self-destructive behavior and are often incapable of meaningful relationships with other adults.

Another important concept of Transactional Analysis is known as stroking. Stroking is a term used to describe our reception of feedback or attention from others. Corey (2004) describes it as, “any act of recognition or source of stimulation” (p. 338). It could be negative or positive stroking.

Berne observed that people require strokes to survive and to do well. Without stroking, he felt that the spinal cord would shrivel. Understanding how people give and receive both positive and negative strokes, and understanding how to change unhealthy

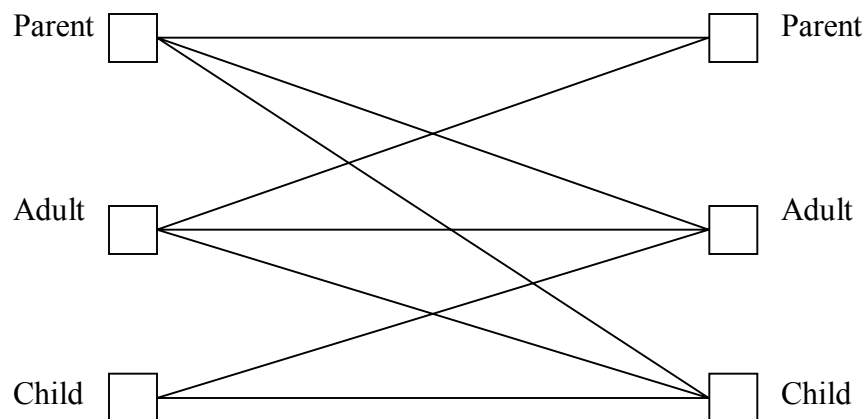
stroking patterns are some of the prime goals of Transactional Analysis. A basic fundamental premise of Transactional Analysis is that human beings need to receive both physical and psychological strokes to develop trust in the world and to form a basis for loving themselves. There is a growing preponderance of evidence that a lack of physical contact or stroking of infants can result in their failure to thrive, or even result in death. Psychological or emotional stroking can be expressed in verbal and nonverbal signs of acceptance and affirmation. Stroking is so vitally important to life that people would prefer to receive negative strokes than no stroking at all because no stroking at all communicates the message that they are insignificant. This would explain why some children act out in negative manners even if it means that they will receive negative strokes (Corey, 2004).

Another core concept of Transactional Analysis is the actual transaction that forms the basic unit of social intercourse. Transactions refer to the communication exchange that takes place between people. Transactions can occur at the explicit and implicit or psychological levels at the same time. An example of this would be someone using a sweet or caring voice to convey a message with sarcastic or caustic intent. In order to properly assess a transaction and understand its corresponding communication, one must be able to understand the words being used, but also interpret the non-verbal, psychological cues as well (Berne, 1964).

A simple reciprocal transaction occurs when both individuals are speaking from the same ego state. For example, "Can you pick up the children?" is an example of an adult to adult transaction. "Yes I can," is an example of an adult to adult response transaction. Communication problems occur when there is a crossed transaction that

finds partners relating to each other in different ego states. “Can you pick up the children?” (adult to adult). “Why do I always have to pick up the children?” (child to parent). Over time these cross communication transactions can develop into behavior patterns within couples and it becomes the script for the manner in which the partners relate with each other. One partner may assume the role of the parent and the other the role of the child. This arrangement greatly hinders their ability to know each other in a covenantal relationship of grace, empowering, and meaningful intimacy. (See Table 4)

Table 4: Transactional Ego States and Relational Patterns



Still another important fundamental concept of Transactional Analysis is the games that people play with each other in the course of their interpersonal transactions. Berne (1964) defines games as certain socially dysfunctional behavior patterns that are repetitive, deviant transactions primarily intended to manipulate others into giving us strokes, but instead they often reinforce negative feelings and self concepts, making the direct expression of trust and emotions. Games are distinguished from other relational procedures and transactions such as rituals, pastimes, or traditions by their ulterior motivation and the subsequent pay-offs. Berne argues that procedures may be successful, rituals effective, and pastimes profitable, but all of them are candid, open exchanges that may involve contest but lack conflict. Games are conversely dishonest at their core and the outcome is usually dramatic. Games involve maneuvers and manipulation.

Berne (1964) states that games find their origin in three positions: persecutor, rescuer, and victim. For example, people who have decided that they are helpless may play a version of the game “poor me” or “kick me”. In the role of persecutor they are assuming a superior role to others. Rescuers play a version of “I am only trying to help you game” (p. 64).

Here are a few categorized examples of the games that Berne (1964) has identified:

- Life Games: Kick Me, Now I’ve Got You, You Son of a Bitch.
- Marital Games: Frigid Women, Look How Hard I’ve Tried.
- Party Games: Ain’t it Awful.
- Sexual Games: Let You and Him Fight.

- Good Games: Happy to Help, They Will Be Glad They Knew Me.

Critique of Transactional Analysis

Like most therapeutic models, Transactional Analysis is entrenched in a humanistic worldview with core ideals that are at odds with biblical understanding of human behavior as it relates to sin. Transactional Analysis assumes that humans are basically good and that with the proper training and intervention, they can leave their pathological behaviors and tendencies behind. It believes that we can take charge of our own lives and make fundamental changes in our behavior. While this is basically true, it isn't as easy as it sounds because people are bound in their destructive behaviors and much of this bondage has spiritual implications that Transactional Analysis alone will not address.

For the Transactional Analysis purist, the role of God as a higher power and as a resource to produce internal change is irrelevant. In addition, there is no place for the power and influence of the devil in pure Transactional Analysis thought. The gravity of the fallen human condition is not taken into account either, and this fact alone can lead to frustrated progress in the clinical application of the model. This fact is demonstrated in the fundamental concept of Transactional Analysis of "I'm okay-you're okay".

Berne's ego states of parent, adult, and child can be argued to be an oversimplification of human personality. It could also be said that Berne's model doesn't allow for the integration of these ego states and instead describes human behavior in a fashion that over-categorizes behavior and does not allow for the complexities that integration would present.

In summation, Berne's Transactional Analysis model is much like many other therapeutic modalities in that it can only address part of the behavioral problems that people will incur because it seeks to do so from a sheer humanistic approach. However, if the model can be integrated into a biblical anthropology and worldview it does have tremendous potential to produce the comprehensive changes in behavior that are desired.

One of the aspects of Transactional Analysis that lends itself to being utilized in concert with a biblical worldview is that it is hope-centered and growth oriented. Berne believed that even the most ill mental patients had potential for change. He sought to assist clients in mobilizing their inner strength found in their adult self as a means for initiating change. People must first grasp the possibility that they can become better than they currently are regardless of their condition. Transactional Analysis locates the power for change within the individual. Transactional Analysis within a biblical worldview locates this power within the individual as they partner with God to address their behavior and their sinful condition which produced it.

Berne also found that one of the greatest sources of energy to produce change laid in focusing on people's strengths. If one's strengths can be appealed to and emphasized, then confidence needed to produce change will arise within them. If the focus is placed mainly upon one's weaknesses, one may be debilitated and rendered unable to change.

Transactional Analysis also shows tremendous insight into human nature and our tendency to use deception and manipulation through games in order to be stroked. People are basically self-centered and are driven by the need to feel secure, significant, and valued, and Transactional Analysis rightly assumes that people will engage in all

kind of behavior contests to get the kind of responses they need from others to ensure that these fundamental needs are met.

Practice

Transactional Analysis has evolved over the course of the last 50 years to include applications in a number of disciplines. Some of these include: psychotherapy, counseling, education, communication, and organizational development. Butman and Jones (1991) assert that Transactional Analysis was roundly embraced in many religious and church settings and was seen by many as a highly effective tool of pastors for understanding the families within their congregations and how they could minister to them.

In psychotherapy, Transactional Analysis therapists endeavor to create a safe and protected climate for clients to assist them in identifying and eliminating dysfunctional behavior and establishing positive relationship styles and healthy functioning. In counseling, Transactional Analysis is employed contractually for the purpose of solving problems. Counseling provides a safe and egalitarian working environment of acceptance for the purpose of developing tools for the improvement of day to day functioning and the overall quality of life. Education students who are exposed to Transactional Analysis are provided with tools for the purpose of increasing their own self-awareness and their awareness of others. They learn more about their patterns of interpersonal interaction and manners in which they can change these patterns to bring about mutually beneficial outcomes. Organizations use Transactional Analysis to improve relationships within the firm and with the customer whom they are attempting to serve.

Transactional Analysis in Group Settings

The area in which Transactional Analysis seems to be the most effective is in group settings. Many of its core principles when analyzed appear to be specifically designed for application in group therapy. The idea of transactions, which is at the core of Transactional Analysis, is best demonstrated within groups. Once group members become aware of the various forms of transactions between individual members, they then have the opportunity to observe the transaction as it is being carried out, and they can learn to eliminate less effective methods of interpersonal interaction.

There are three stages in the group process using Transactional Analysis methodology: the initial, the working, and the final stages. In the initial stage of the group process, the leader and the group work to establish trust that will lead to the formation of a comfort zone where real relational work can occur. The leader also identifies group members' goals for treatment and does so in a manner that focuses on the client as the initiator of that change (Corey. 2004).

During the working stage, games are identified and analyzed to see how they support each member's life script. The leader seeks to lead group members into taking charge of their lives. He or she challenges them in their games, and affirms them in making strides to improve their transactions with others within the group. Role playing of earlier situations may take place for the purpose of generating Gestaltic energy for breakthroughs in places where they are stuck emotionally.

During the final stage, re-decisions are made and clients begin to feel and behave in new ways. They are encouraged to tell a new story in the group to replace their old story, and they receive strokes to support their new position. The focus in the final phase

of group work is to transfer the changes they have experienced within the group into their everyday lives.

The key to the effectiveness of Transactional Analysis within group settings is the willingness of group members to design a therapeutic contract that requires them to verbalize their true intentions and goals. These contracts form the specific objectives and goals that measure the progress of the group. This places a tremendous responsibility upon the group members to seek after their own change and the change of others and it molds the group together into a cooperative effort for comprehensive change within the group. The individual states their specific goal and then designs a contract on how they intend to work toward the achievement of that goal.

This goal must be so thoroughly and clearly defined that its achievement is clearly observable. The therapist's role in assisting the group members in their achievement of their goals is to be authentic and skillful in helping them to identify ego states, games, and alternatives for re-decisioning. The therapist must communicate humility, equality, and openness. Their behavior should be the model for the group members to follow (Donigian and Malnati, 1987).

In addition to personal characteristics, Transactional Analysis group leaders must be highly skilled in the collection and analysis of group data. Their powers of observation and interpretation must be highly developed. They must be skilled in analyzing the various core concepts of Transactional Analysis such as the ego-state, transactions, games, and scripts (Donigian and Malnati, 1987).

In the remaining chapters Family Systems theory and Transactional Analysis will be employed in the process of working with the Simpson (pseudonym) family to identify

the source of their current problems and developing a plan to address them as they move toward relational health. Their problems will be treated as systemic problems and special emphasis will be placed upon the dysfunctional transactional behavior patterns in an effort to identify the most operant ego states, the games that are most often played, and the dominant scripts. Chapter four will focus upon family history and assessment of the family system along with a detailed analysis. Chapter five will detail the actual application of the plan of care within the family group counseling setting.

Chapter 4

Married Couple History of Adam and Sandy Simpson and Analysis

Adam and Sandy Simpson (pseudonyms) are a Caucasian married couple ages 43 and 38 respectively. They have been married for 17 years and neither of them has ever been married before. They are the parents of three daughters ages 14, 10, and 7. They live in a rural setting and are members of a large Pentecostal church where they are both actively involved. Adam works as a computer technician while Sandy has been a stay at home mom for most of their married life. Recently, she has taken a job at the local hospital in the radiology department. She enjoys her work and the extra income that the job affords her.

Adam and Sandy present as a couple who have in their words, “fallen out of love”. Adam complains that Sandy is emotionally cold and distant from him and “has been for years”. This is particularly difficult for him because as he reports, he prefers giving and receiving love in the form of physical affection. Sandy reports that she feels alone in this marriage and this feeling of “aloneness” is particularly acute in the area of parental responsibilities. Not only does Adam defer to Sandy regarding parental responsibilities, he also exhibits frequent angry outbursts toward the children, provides little assistance with domestic duties, spends long hours playing computer games, and demands sex from Sandy without any relational connection with her at all. Initially, both partners present as wanting to salvage the marriage if possible, but Sandy reports a lack of energy for the arduous process of repairing their damaged relationship.

Personal History

Adam was born as the fourth of five children. It is important to note that there is a nine year separation between Adam and the youngest child due to the fact that during much of Adam's developmental years, he was the youngest of the family only to have that position in the family's constellation taken from him by an unexpected fifth child. In Adam's family of origin, his mother took care of everyone's personal needs. She cooked and cleaned, managed the kids with all of their issues, and provided all of the discipline and love for the children. In Adam's words, "she spoiled all of us". Adam reported never having to clean his room or take care of his clothes. "Mom did it all".

Adam's assessment of his family was that it was close knit and full of affectionate love but that most of it came from his mother. Adam's father worked very hard to provide for the family's financial needs but didn't contribute a great deal to the emotional or affective climate of the family. Adam knew that his father loved him but reported that he didn't receive a lot of affection from him as he grew up. The family vacationed and recreated together. There was a lot of emphasis placed upon outdoor recreation and sports. There was also a great deal of emphasis placed upon competition. Adam reports that his relationships with his siblings were close but with boundaries.

As Adam grew up he remained in the home. He did not go to college but did take a few courses at a local community college. He remained in the home until he met and married Sandy at age 25. Until, this time Adam's mother continued to maintain his room, his clothes, and his meals as she always had when he was a boy.

Adam reports that the first thing that drew him to Sandy was her obvious physical beauty. She was very fit and she comported herself in a very classy and "put together"

way. Every hair was in place, her make-up was always immaculate, and her clothes were both stylish and neat. Her physical appearance and deportment signaled to Adam that Sandy was someone who seemed to have her life together and may be the person for him to consider settling down with and marrying.

Sandy was born as the third of three daughters to her parents. Her family was close but became somewhat fragmented by her father's depressive tendencies that streamed from his experience in the Korean War. He had been formally diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD. Sandy's father was ten years older than her mother. His PTSD was presented most acutely in severe depressive episodes that caused him to be periodically institutionalized throughout Sandy's childhood and early adolescent years. Sandy reports that she loved her dad but due to his emotional status and his physical absences during her childhood, she didn't feel as close to him as she did her mother.

Sandy's mom was the motivating force in her family. All of the attention and affection for Sandy and her two sisters came from their mother, and Sandy reports that it was not given at very high levels. Sandy's mom was domineering and was not very loving or given to physical displays of affection. She didn't pay a lot of attention to the details of her daughters' lives and for the most part she left them to make decisions on their own. From a very early age, Sandy and her sisters took on most of the domestic chores in the home. From this upbringing, Sandy surmised that she was strongly influenced into developing an independent spirit that saw things that needed to be done and she just did them without asking for help or assistance from anyone else.

Sandy reports that she didn't do very well in school and she attributes that to the fact that she didn't think she was very smart. She remembered that as a child she had very low self-esteem and even now demonstrates a very low opinion of herself and her abilities. In spite of having low self-esteem, Sandy is not a person without goals. As a late teen, she had a desire to become a beautician and began to make plans to pursue that goal even without the assistance of her mother.

The most difficult season of Sandy's life began at age 13 when her father was institutionalized for the last time. He was committed as the result of suicidal ideations that were related to his PTSD and related depression. Sandy visited him on several occasions but chose not to continue visiting him when he exhibited what Sandy described as "disturbing behavior" during one of their visits. Her dad continued to write Sandy and her sisters but none of them visited him anymore. This went on for a few months and then at age 14, Sandy had to deal with the news that her father had committed suicide. This event shook Sandy in her core and caused her to withdraw inwardly. This development also created an even greater rift with her and her mother, and she turned even more inward and became even more independent and self-sufficient than before.

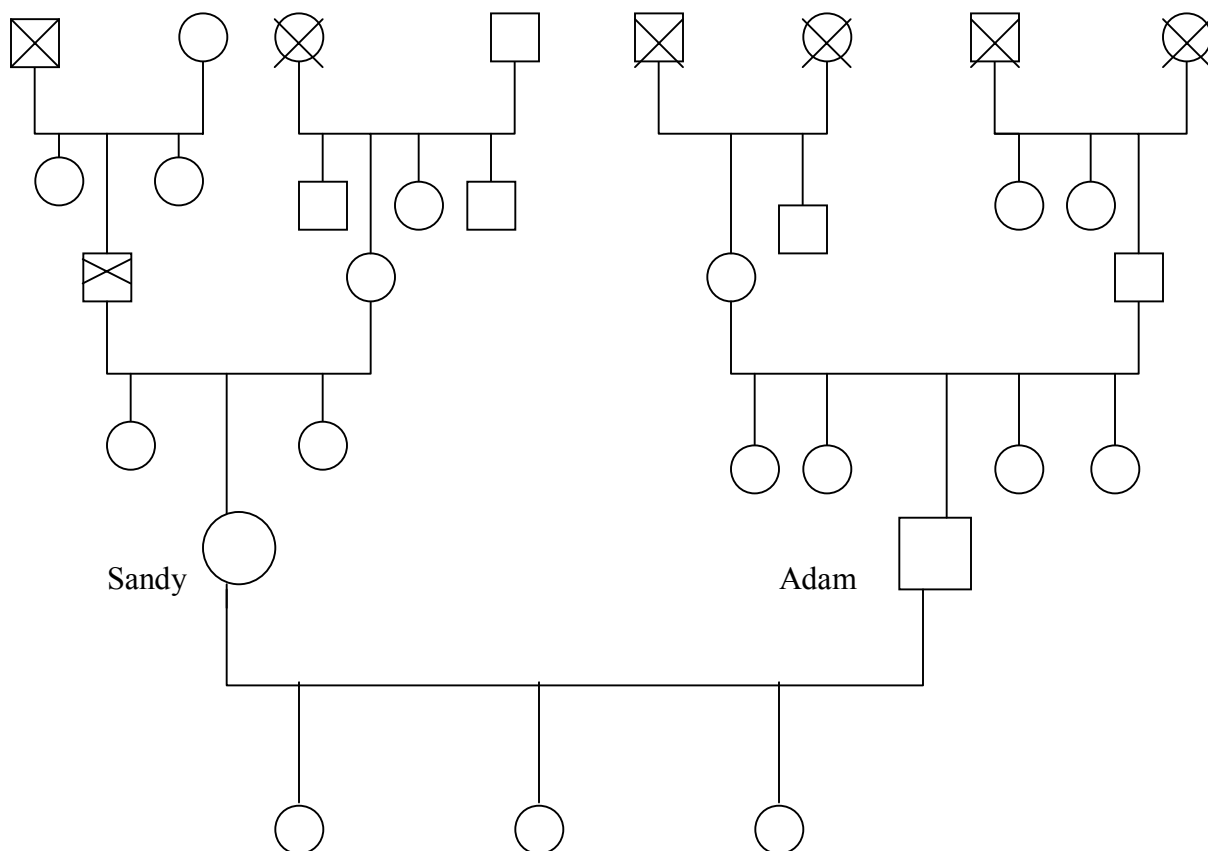
At age 17 Sandy wanted to launch her plans to attend beauty school but she received absolutely no support in this dream from her mother. In fact she received nothing but the opposite of support from her mom. Sandy's mother discouraged her from becoming a beautician and in response to this Sandy left home and went out on her own to live with her oldest sister. Sandy never went to beauty school but instead entered into the working world and stayed there until she met Adam and they had their first daughter.

Courtship

When Adam and Sandy met, Sandy was drawn to what she described as being his spontaneous and playful attitude. She found this as a pleasant departure from her life where she had to grow up faster than she expected with the death of her father and her decision to leave home at 17. Adam also loved the outdoors and loved physical activity, both of which were in stark contrast to Sandy's childhood experience. Sandy was also attracted by the fact that Adam seemed to be captivated by her and as a result, gave her the attention and affection that she never received from her father or mother. Adam made her feel alive and vibrant and from her perspective gave her the chance to have a stable family that she felt that she never had.

As was stated earlier, Adam was drawn to Sandy by her obvious physical attractiveness and by her independent spirit. Sandy was very disciplined and paid attention to detail. She was very responsible and this attracted Adam. If Adam could give Sandy all of the vibrancy and excitement that her childhood had lacked, Sandy could give Adam a sense of continuity from the care and commitment he had received throughout his life from his mother. Adam brought spontaneity and excitement to the relationship, Sandy brought order and coordination to their life. It seemed that each partner would provide their prospective spouse with important factors that they were looking for in a mate.

Genogram for Adam and Sandy Simpson



Early Marriage

The first year of Adam and Sandy's marriage was marked by a lot of fun and spontaneity where the couple did a lot of things together. But in the second year things changed. According to Sandy, Adam began to exhibit what she described as an obsessive behavior in regard to his hobbies such as softball and four-wheeling and never seemed to have enough time to spend with her. She felt that she was becoming an accessory to Adam's life and all of their activities centered around his interests without commensurate attention being given to things that she enjoyed. In addition, Adam also lost interest in helping Sandy around the house. He also stopped courting Sandy and began demanding sex from her without any interest in relating to her or addressing her emotional needs in the process.

Adam had a much different point of view. From his standpoint, the marriage changed when Sandy stopped being involved with his activities and chose rather to stay at home. He felt that she spent an inordinate time focusing on domestic issues and not enough time enjoying life. He also felt that she had initiated their problems in the bedroom by shutting down on him sexually, and now he felt as if he had to beg her for any sexual attention.

Children

In year three of their marriage, Adam and Sandy celebrated the birth of their first daughter and the other two daughters came in year seven and year ten respectively. Both Adam and Sandy exhibited a great deal of love and affection for their girls but it was Sandy's responsibility to ensure their primary care. They mutually agreed that Adam would continue working while Sandy could stay home and care for the girls during their

early years. This arrangement was certainly beneficial for the well-being for the girls but seemed to further striate the relationship between Adam and Sandy. Sandy found herself more emotionally connected to the girls and absorbed in their care while Adam remained on the periphery and the two became more disconnected from each other. Adam felt this disconnection and as a way to fill what he perceived was a lack of attention from Sandy, he became more obsessively involved in his activities. Over time his activities shifted from outdoor activities to more reclusive activities like computer games. He particularly enjoyed games that engaged him in some sort of medieval adventures with witches, knights, warlocks, and spells. The amount of time that Adam was spending on the computer disturbed Sandy as did the emphasis on what she felt was the spiritually questionable content of the games he was playing. She voiced her concern and disdain for this practice to Adam but he insisted that he played the games only as a means for relaxation from his stressful and tedious job. Sam didn't accept his reasoning and their inability to negotiate the impasse' to a mutually acceptable compromise led to even more emotional turmoil and separation.

Recent Developments and Current Status

Currently, both Adam and Sandy report that their marriage isn't healthy. Adam still asserts his need to unwind and relax via computer games and Sandy has also discovered that he has also indulged in internet pornography. When confronted Adam states that he had visited the sites as Sandy expected and that he recognized that it was a problem that he needed to address.

A recent revelation has uncovered that Adam had kissed a friend of Sandy's who lives near them and who also attends church with them. Adam has denied any further

contact with the friend but the closeness of their living proximity and their mutual church attendance has made all of the relationships somewhat tense. In addition to this episode, Sandy reports that Adam has a tendency to be overly excited when in the company of other women at church or in other public venues. He hugs many of them and extends them courtesies and compliments that he denies toward Sandy. He engages them in conversation and shows interest in a way that for Sandy is a stark contrast for the way that he treats her. He will not engage her in conversation. He has stopped accompanying Sandy and the girls on family trips and attributes this to a hyper-sensitivity to sunlight, a development that Sandy sincerely questions. His spontaneity and vibrant personality that once drew Sandy to Adam is now only reserved for public venues and for women who are not his wife.

In recent days Sandy has discovered that she has contracted Herpes and this has moved her to seriously consider a divorce. She reports that she has been entirely faithful to Adam and has never had sexual relations with any other man. Upon learning of her diagnosis, Sandy recalled that the friend whom Adam had kissed had told her that she also had Herpes, and from this concluded that Adam's relationship with her must have surely extended well beyond the confines of just one kiss.

This betrayal by Adam signaled the last straw for Sandy. Adam could not be trusted. He had lied to her about the video games, the on-line pornography, and now about his involvement with a former friend. In short, Sandy now wants to end the marriage. She is leaving the door open for reconciliation although she reports that she doesn't think she has the emotional energy to try. For Adam, he admits that he is at fault for his infidelity but explains his behavior as a result of Sandy's shutting him down

earlier in their marriage. He admits that he has great culpability in the demise of their marriage to its current state, but he states that he is wholeheartedly committed to saving their marriage.

Theological and Clinical Analysis

Theological Analysis

Theologically speaking Adam and Sandy's marriage never really seemed to be based upon the theological foundation of covenant as detailed in chapter 2. Instead of establishing a relationship based upon unconditional and bilateral commitment, it seemed that their relationship reflected the values of a quid pro quo system that prevails in contractual relationships. Both Adam and Sandy withdrew from the relationship as their own personal needs seemed to become less of a concern for the other. Their love for each other appeared to be quite conditional and based upon their partner's response to them. As this conditional quality evolved within their relationship, each partner resolved to give to the other only as much as they received and their relationship deteriorated to a childish game of keeping score of who contributes what to the family. This sort of gamesmanship is not productive within a marriage and family system that was designed by God for mutual contribution, submission, and enjoyment.

Due to the lack of unconditional love that is forged in a covenant relationship, there was also not a great deal of grace within Adam and Sandy's relationship. Instead, their relationship operated heavily upon principles of the law of each other's expectations. For Adam, Sandy was expected to perform at a standard that met his expectations. The house had to be in a certain order. The kids had to be maintained and

kept in check and never allowed to impose on Adam's time or his emotions beyond a reasonable limit. As it relates to their sexual relationship, Sandy was always expected to perform regardless of how she felt physically or if her emotional needs had been addressed. For Sandy, Adam needed to be more involved in domestic duties and needed to be more engaged as a father if he was going to receive the benefits of her affection and attention. In short neither Adam nor Sandy felt that they measured up to the expectations of the other and the result of this failure and inadequacy is that both of them gave up trying to serve the other and minister to their needs. A graceless marriage initially leads to a marriage that places a lot of emphasis upon performance but over time it leads to rejection, despair, and hopelessness.

As it relates to empowering, it is apparent that neither Adam nor Sandy felt the need to empower their spouse in this relationship. Rather than seeking to empower their partner, both Adam and Sandy sought to consolidate their own power by using money, sex, involvement in parental responsibilities, participation in family activities or whatever means available to assert his or her own claims to all of the power in the relationship. Sandy viewed Adam as a fourth child and instead of empowering him to assume more of an equal status within their relationship, she enabled him to remain in the carefree status that had heretofore been afforded him by his mother. Adam viewed Sandy as someone who was placed within his life to serve his needs and his convenience, and therefore never empowered her by showing concern for her relational needs and aspirations as a woman. For him, she occupied the position of making sure his life ran as smoothly as possible without him having to be concerned with the details. Instead of being empowered partners, Adam and Sandy existed as adversarial combatants.

Without the bilateral, unconditional love that proceeds from a covenantal love, and the mutual acceptance that comes from a relationship that is established upon grace, and the empowerment to be authentic and thereby vulnerable, Adam and Sandy's relationship also lacked the final ingredient of a sound marriage, intimacy. Intimacy requires unconditional love, acceptance, and the freedom to be emotionally exposed, and the Simpson household exhibited none of these traits and as a result, Adam and Sandy grew further and further apart. Adam retreated to his computer games and not being engaged with the family, Sandy resorted to throwing herself into the girls and being content to let Adam stay on the periphery. Neither spouse made meaningful attempts at bridging the gap that existed between them, and instead opted for the course of self-preservation and upholding their own righteousness within their relationship.

Without covenantal love, a climate of grace, mutual empowering, and true intimacy, Adam and Sandy's marriage has deteriorated to the brink of total dissolution of their relationship. If their marriage is to be salvaged and brought back to health, these issues must be addressed and each quality needs to be reestablished in sequence so as to reverse the cycle of marital defeat by creating a climate in which the relationship can survive and even thrive.

Clinical Analysis

From a clinical standpoint, a case can be made for the notion that the current status of Adam and Sandy's marriage is the product of the family systems that produced it. Adam's position within his family's constellation, his late exit from the home of his parents, and his dependence upon his mother contributed greatly to his somewhat overdeveloped child ego state. From his child ego state, Adam has projected the schema

once reserved for his relationship with his mother to that of his wife, Sandy. As a result, Adam has difficulty interacting with Sandy in multilateral, adult to adult transactions. The most common transactional relationship pattern that he has with Sandy is that of child to parent. He depends upon her to manage the day to day details of the household, and looks to her to meet his emotional and sexual needs without regard for his role in meeting the commensurate needs in her. Her criticism of him or her efforts to introduce boundaries upon his behavior are viewed with the same disdain that he would attribute to an overly critical parent. He thereby responds with a subversive rebellion that resembles how a child might react to a parent who in their mind is trying to infringe on their freedom. Any attempts to discuss their interaction inevitably lead to a deference of personal responsibility and a defensive attitude that seeks to rest responsibility for his behavior on some initiating behavior from Sandy. His behaviors outside of the marriage such as his attentiveness to other women, his efforts to appear as the loving husband and concerned father, and his overall public image can be viewed as games that Adam plays to obtain the positive strokes that he doesn't receive at home.

Sandy's family system was also quite prescriptive of the manner in which she would relate within this marriage. Never receiving the care and attention that she needed, Sandy retreated into a self-sufficient independence that stopped attempting to engage her father and more notably her mother. This self-sufficient independence forged very defined adult and parental ego states within Sandy that she brought into her marriage with Adam. She was attracted to Adam's spontaneity and care-free spirit in the beginning because it provided her with the attention that she had so lacked as a child. But his pronounced child ego state also allowed her to further develop her parental and adult ego

states and therefore, the most common transactional relationship pattern for Sandy in regard to Adam was parent to child or adult to child. She often would refer to him in public as her fourth child. The result of this transactional arrangement was that Sandy's parental ego state often enabled Adam's continuance in his child ego state and vice versa. Adam's unwillingness to support Sandy with parental responsibilities or his lack of participation in family activities tapped into Sandy's schema toward her mother that caused her to distance herself from both her mother and Adam and continue on in her independent, self-sufficiency. It also tapped into Sandy's tendency to play the victim so as to gain strokes for herself from her friends and close associates.

With time Sandy's parental behavior toward Adam and Adam's childlike interaction toward Sandy eroded the couple's chance for establishing a meaningfully intimate relationship with each other. Adam's spontaneous and care-free spirit became childishness to Sandy and consequently, Adam now viewed Sandy's responsible and "put together manner" as being overly critical and in his words "bitchy". Due to the inability of the couple to establish a bilateral transactional pattern consisting of parent to parent and adult to adult transactions, the couple's interaction deteriorated into the same dysfunctional pattern of parent to child transactions. This development totally undermined their efforts at true marital intimacy and the development of a "one flesh" relationship.

The key to assisting Adam and Sandy in the resolution of their marital problems lies in effectively identifying their dysfunctional transactional patterns, connecting these patterns to their underlying schema that proceed from their original family systems, and through careful re-decisioning, help them to establish new schemas for relating to each

other in a more bi-lateral fashion. Given the emotional damage that has been wrought from years of relational dysfunction and the recent discovery of infidelity, great attention will also need to be given to the acceptance of personal responsibility, forgiveness, and the tenuous process of reestablishing trust within the relationship. Chapter 5 will be a discussion of the therapeutic intervention attempted at accomplishing these clinical goals.

Chapter 5

Therapeutic Intervention of Adam and Sandy Simpson

This chapter describes the clinical assessment, plan of care, and actual therapeutic intervention for Adam and Sandy Simpson. The goals for this intervention are as follows:

- Analyze and integrate information gleaned from clinical assessment tools such as the Kiersey Temperament Sorter along with information gained during intake interviews and genogram.
- Analyze this information to identify recurring patterns of relational behavior, family system dynamics and leverage points for producing change.
- Identify the prominent ego states, games, schema, and life-scripts that are deemed detrimental to the overall health of the relationship.
- Assist the couple in the formulation of new games, schema, and life-scripts that would lead them to relational health and vitality.

The ultimate goal is to assist Adam and Sandy to heal their damaged relationship and retool them in a manner that will help them to cultivate skills and the structural strength necessary for a healthy marriage and family system.

Integrative Test Analysis

The first clinical instrument used with Adam and Sandy was the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or TJTA as it is commonly called. The TJTA is designed to describe a person's temperament by asking a number of questions and using those responses to chart their temperament on nine distinct factor continuums. The factors are

listed as follows: Nervous/Composed, Depressive/Light-hearted, Active/Quiet, Expressive/Inhibited, Sympathetic/Indifferent, Subjective/Objective, Dominant/Submissive, Hostile/Tolerant, and Self-disciplined/Impulsive. Each continuum classifies a person's temperament under the following scales: excellent, acceptable, improvement desirable, and improvement needed. Sandy scored on the improvement needed scale of three different factors and improvement desirable on a fourth factor. The first of these factors was the Anxiety scale or the Nervous/Composed scale. Her percentile score was 90% which indicated that she experienced high degrees of nervous anxiety. When presented with this score, she was not surprised. Sandy described herself as being on edge at home all of the time, and she attributed much of this anxiety to the stress of raising her three daughters without much assistance from Adam. She went on to say that she basically feels overwhelmed by the pressure in her life. The second factor in which Sandy scored in the improvement needed scale was the depressive factor. Sandy also confirmed this score as being accurate with her understanding of herself and reported a history that involved prescribed anti-depressants. It is important to remember that Sandy's father had a long battle with depression that resulted in suicide.

Before I list the third extreme factor, it is important to note that Sandy did score in the excellent range on one factor and that is the active-social factor. Sandy loves people and enjoys activity and would like nothing more than to be engaged in regular social contact. This is significant for two reasons. First of all, Adam scores on this scale were in direct opposition to Sandy's. Adam scored in the 15% range which indicated that he was more quiet and reclusive while Sandy scored in the 90% range which indicates a more socially active temperament preference. The second reason this is significant is that

Sandy's third improvement needed factor is on the inhibited scale. She scored in the 15% range which indicates that she feels strongly inhibited in her expressiveness. Given the fact that Sandy reports a desire to be socially active and engaged, and yet she feels very much inhibited in her expression, it appears that her desire to be active and expressive is being blocked by another factor in her life. Sandy concluded that Adam's recent quiet, almost reclusive activity has forced her to go it alone with their girls on family outings and activities. Sandy also reported that Adam's refusal to accompany them only heightens her anxiety and depression because she feels that she is in the marriage alone. Many times in the counseling sessions Sandy stated that she "wanted a partner in marriage and in parenting instead of a disinterested roommate who just needed her to help keep his life together."

On the remaining factor scales with the exception of one, Sandy scored in the acceptable range. The main concerns raised from analyzing Sandy's scores on the TJTA come from the extreme scores where improvement is needed. It seems obvious that at least part of the reason she feels anxious, depressed, and inhibited is due to the fact that she feels disconnected from the partner that she needs to find in Adam.

The most striking scores for Adam on the TJTA were his scores on the quiet, indifferent, and impulsive scales. Adam scored 6% on the quiet scale. This score was quite surprising due to the fact that it was his outgoing personality that first attracted Sandy to him. It was also a bit puzzling due to the fact that Adam was more active and involved in settings away from home. In addition to this, Adam's score on the sympathetic/indifferent scale indicates a high level of indifference to what is going on around him. Adam attributes his quietness to the fact that he enjoys the solitude as an

escape from a pressure-filled job but had no real answer for the high indifference scores. He did not perceive himself as being uncaring or unsympathetic. Sandy did however see him as being quite indifferent. The final significant factor comes from the impulsive scale. Adam scored in the heart of the improvement desirable range on the impulsive scale. Adam confirms that he is somewhat disorganized and often changes his mind.

The TJTA was the first instrument used with Adam and Sandy and it provided some insight into their interaction with each other and the status of their relationship. The second instrument used was the Kiersey Temperament Sorter. The Kiersey test utilizes much of the same Jungian thought that is used in the more commonly known Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator. Instead of measuring temperament on nine factor scales, it measures temperament and personality preferences on four factor scales: Extroversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, and Judging/Perceiving. Sandy's profile was ESFJ, the Guardian-Provider. As Guardian-Provider, Sandy is one who works really hard to be a part of a larger system around her, values security and safety in the home, and sees to it that the needs of those in her family are met. Kiersey refers to Guardians as being a stabilizing force in the systems where they are functioning (Kiersey, 1998). This finding is quite consistent with the active-social scale scores from the TJTA. Sandy is really concerned with engaging with people in her life. As a Guardian-Provider, she values decisiveness and responsibility. She believes everything has a time and a place.

Adam's profile is the same as Sandy's with the exception of one factor. Instead of having Sandy's strong J or judging tendency, he scores highly on the P or perceiving tendency. J's like to make decisions and tend to value a distinct plan and routine for life.

P's prefer to keep their options open and are more prone to put off making decisions and have a difficulty following through with plans. Adam's profile is characterized by Kiersey as the Artisan Performer.

Kiersey states that the combination of Guardians with Artisans in marriage settings is quite common and can be quite successful. The Guardian is attracted by the spontaneous, imaginative, and child-like playfulness of the Artisan which at times can mitigate their nose-to-the-grindstone approach to life. The Artisan is attracted by the stability and almost paternal-like watchfulness of the Guardian who helps keep them on track (Kiersey, 1998). He goes on to say that these relationships often resemble that of a mischievous child and care-taking parent. The Artisan husband frequently interacts with his Guardian wife as if she were his mother and the wife sees her husband as one of her boys. He concludes by saying that these relationships can carry on well as long as the inherent points of conflict are taken in stride and not allowed to be a point of contention where it wears down each partner (Kiersey, 1998). One point of contrast between the two assessments for Adam that bears pointing out is the divergence on his demeanor as being quiet or outgoing. On the TJTA, Adam was reported as being quiet and inhibited, while on the Kiersey test, he was reported as being more outgoing, fun-loving, and a risk taker. These results appear to be at odds with other. Sandy stated that she believed that Adam was still the active and care-free Artisan when it suited his needs and outside of the home, but retreated into a quiet and inhibited shell when it came to responsibilities at home and connecting with her in non-sexual ways. Adam was defensive of this characterization and stated that he was more quiet at home because of his need to relax

and retreat from the pressures of his job, and from feeling inadequate to address Sandy's need to connect emotionally at a higher level.

Analytical Conclusions

In examining the results of the two instruments used, one can conclude that both the TJTA and the Kiersey Temperament Sorter yield valuable information that exhibit prevailing themes that are to be taken into consideration. However, it appears that the findings of the Kiersey Temperament Sorter are more consistent with the information gained from the intake interviews, family systems analysis, and Transactional Analysis. Sandy is the partner who shoulders the lion's share of the responsibility in the family. She is the Guardian-Protector who attends to everyone's needs in the family before she attends to herself. This Guardian-Protector temperament is quite consistent with the information that can be drawn from her self-reporting in the intake interview. A case can also be made that her temperament is the result of the lack of support that she received from her family of origin, particularly her mother. She seeks connection in a group larger than herself, and she takes the initiative to attend to her needs because she didn't receive that during her childhood, adolescence, and post-adolescence. In Adam and Sandy's family system, Sandy is the galvanizing force that pulls everything together. She is the mothering figure both for the children and for Adam. In Transactional Analysis, her Guardian-Protector temperament presents her with a double-edged sword in that it leads her to want to connect meaningfully with Adam but restricts this connection because it also promotes her responding to him from the parental ego state. Parental to child transactions do provide intimacy but not the sort that married couples need to sustain them over time.

Adam is the Artisan-Performer who doesn't like to conform to Sandy's idea of being responsible and attentive to the necessary tasks of being a parent and a spouse. He is somewhat spontaneous and impulsive in his actions and decision making. In the beginning these characteristics attracted Sandy to Adam just as Sandy's mothering and organizational skills drew Adam to her but with time they have lost their allure. Adam's spontaneity and care-free spirit was now interpreted by Sandy as the indifference that was illustrated in his score on the TJTA. Sandy's desire to connect with Adam and engage him in partnering with her in the responsibilities in the household was now interpreted by Adam as being too pushy and in his words "bitchy". In what resembles parent to child interactions, Adam has chosen to rebel against Sandy's parental calls for him to "grow up", and in his rebellion has chosen to isolate himself from her by occupying himself by being quiet and removed from Sandy and the girls. This quietness like his indifference was also noted on his TJTA scores. In response to his quietness, Sandy becomes cold and indifferent to him and refuses his periodic advances for affection and sexual connection. She resorts to an old mechanism of going it alone, and carries on with the raising of their girls and the operation of the household without him. The end result of the rebellion of Adam's child ego state against the overly responsible parental ego state of Sandy is that the two spouses retreat to themselves and secure a great emotional distance between each other. The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with the therapeutic process designed to reduce this distance and promote healthier functioning between Adam and Sandy.

Treatment Sessions

Session I

The session began with a review of information gleaned from the intake interviews. We then moved on to an analysis of the assessment results from the TJTA and the Kiersey Temperament Sorter. I then pointed out to both Adam and Sandy that there did appear to be some correlation between the information given in the interviews and the personality preferences that were indicated on the testing instruments. Adam's family appeared to be quite a close knit unit where Adam's mother attended to all of the families physical and emotional needs. Adam stated, "mom took care of everything". I asked Adam if the fact that he was the baby in the family until he was nine years old had any meaning for him. He stated, "I guess mom spoiled all of us, but being the baby for so long, maybe I got spoiled the worst." We then discussed the possibility that his over-functioning mother quite possibly could have enhanced the development of his care-free, impulsive personality that often bristled at the idea of being disciplined enough to bear responsibility. Adam recognized with some defensiveness, that perhaps this was the case.

Sandy stated that her family was indeed fragmented although she did feel quite close to her two sisters. I asked her if she felt that there was a correlation between the emotional distance she felt regarding her father and mother have any impact upon her personality. She stated that not connecting meaningfully with her dad at an early age may have caused her to always feel anxious and insecure. She stated, "daddies make their little girls feel safe and special, and I never felt that from my dad". I then asked her about her relationship with her mom and she replied, "mom never supported me in

anything I tried to do”. We then explored how this feeling of non-support from either of her parents shaped her personality and the way she went about life. Sandy stated, “I made a decision that my family would be important to me and that I would do what it took to make sure that my family would not be like the family that I came from.” By correlating the assessment results with her family of origin, Sandy concluded that there was a strong connection between her family and her current and lifelong state of anxiety and her willingness to “go it alone” when left unsupported.

At the conclusion of the session, I asked both Adam and Sandy to write down three things about each other that initially attracted them to each other.

Session II

We began the session by reviewing the insights gained from session one, and then we looked at the homework assignment: three things that initially attracted them to each other. Adam’s list began by listing that he was initially attracted to Sandy because of her physical appearance. He then stated that he was attracted to Sandy because she seemed very organized and disciplined with the affairs of her life. He liked the fact that her house and her car were neat and that her clothes were always neat and stylish. The third thing that he liked was that she paid attention to a lot of the little things in his life. I asked Adam if there was any correlation between the things that initially attracted him to Sandy and the way that his mother used to take care of him when he was at home. Did Sandy in any way replace mom? He stated that it wasn’t his intention to look for someone to replace his mom but he did allow for the possibility that he was subconsciously attracted to Sandy’s qualities that were consistent with those of his mother. I asked Adam, “what impact did these same qualities in Sandy have on his

personality and behavior?” He stated, “I always felt comfortable around Sandy, and I felt that I could always be myself.”

Sandy’s list was somewhat different. She said that she was attracted to the fact that Adam’s family seemed so close. She felt that even though she thought he was a bit of a “mama’s boy”, she still envied the fact that Adam had a good relationship with both his mother and his father. She thought that this may be an advantage for establishing a close family unit of her own. Sandy also stated that she felt attracted to Adam because he was fun. He was active and athletic and enjoyed the outdoors. He was spontaneous. He made her laugh. The final thing that attracted Sandy to Adam was that he paid her a lot of attention. She was the center of his universe during their courting period and early marriage. I asked Sandy, “did Adam give you something that your mom and dad didn’t or couldn’t give you?” She responded, “Adam was always light and fun and that lifted my spirits”. “He made me feel good about myself.”

We concluded the session by stating that it appeared that Adam gave Sandy something that she desired but didn’t get from her family of origin and that Sandy seemed to be a bridge for Adam and in many ways was a continuation of the relationship that he had enjoyed with his mother.

Session III

In session three my goal was to use the correlations and conclusions drawn from the interviews and the assessment tools for the purpose of introducing Adam and Sandy to a Transactional Analysis of their marriage from its inception to the present. I explained some of the basic premises of Transactional Analysis to them and we paid particular attention to the development of ego states and to the transactional patterns of

behavior that seem to develop in our closest relationships. Sandy stated that she most often functioned in the parental ego state and that this was the result of her desire to connect meaningfully in a way that her parents had not connected with her, and from her independent spirit who just sees what needs to be done and does it. She stated that the relational pattern that seemed most dominant between her and Adam was the parent to child pattern. I acknowledged this pattern but asked her to consider if Adam's impulsive and carefree personality ever influenced her to connect with him on a child to child continuum. She stated that this may have occurred in the first few years of their marriage but not recently. I asked Sandy what relational pattern did she most want to relate to Adam in and she responded, "adult to adult".

Adam was somewhat reluctant to accept that the relational pattern that existed between him and Sandy was child to parent or parent to child. He didn't want to accept it because it seemed to paint him in the rather negative light of being childish. He did accede to the fact that Sandy took care of most of the major household responsibilities with little assistance from him and that this did bear a striking resemblance to the way that he related with his mother. I asked Adam did he think that he and Sandy related to each other in the child to child pattern earlier in their marriage and he replied, "Yes". He stated that he and Sandy used to be able to have more fun in the early days of their marriage but that something changed after the first few years that they were married.

I concluded the session and asked Adam and Sandy to think about what may have changed in their relationship that caused them to forsake the child to child relational pattern of play and fun, and what prohibited them from relating to each other on an adult to adult relational pattern.

Session IV

I began session four with some assessments that I had drawn about Adam and Sandy's relationship and I shared these assessments with them to see if they had any merit. I concluded that Adam and Sandy's early relationship operated on two dominant transactional patterns. The most dominant pattern was that of the parent to child pattern. Sandy's overly-responsible nature coupled with her desire to connect with Adam and take care of him was displayed in the form of an overly-nurturing parent. Adam's tendency to be impulsive and carefree and his unwillingness to accept a great deal of domestic responsibility most often manifested as an under-responsible child. The moments when Sandy joined him in playing and having fun demonstrated a more child to child transactional pattern.

Having made a case for these dominant patterns that existed in the early stages of Adam and Sandy's marriage, I moved on and encouraged them to consider what caused these patterns to develop and what effects these patterns have had on their relationship over time. Both Adam and Sandy agreed that these patterns emerged from their life-scripts that came from their families of origin and were solidified by the fact that both of them were reacting against or in concert with these scripts in their choice of mate. Sandy was reacting against her life-script when she chose Adam because he gave her the attention and the possibility for closeness that she never received from her family of origin. Adam was acting in concert with his life-script because Sandy seemed to be able to care for his personal needs and not require him to assume a great deal of personal responsibility.

I then challenged Adam and Sandy to think about how these transactional patterns contributed to the emotional distance that now existed within their relationship. After much consideration, Sandy stated that all that she ever wanted was to meaningfully connect with Adam and have the close family relationships that she had never known growing up. I asked her to consider if this desire to connect with him caused her to relate to him relate to him in the way that she could most naturally give and he could most naturally receive: mother to son? She stated that this was a possibility. I asked Adam if his relationship with his mother was the most comfortable relationship pattern he had known prior to getting married. He acknowledged that it was.

I affirmed the fact that parental-child relationships do enjoy a certain level of intimacy but not within a marriage. I explained to them that parent-child relational patterns are not relational patterns that can be carried out among equals for great lengths of time. The spouse who acts as a parent is seen as controlling and oppressive and the spouse who acts more as a child is seen as irresponsible and childish. I went on to explain that this kind of relational pattern was fine in the beginning because it was the most natural for them to occupy but it would not sustain them over the long haul. Sandy wanted a partner to connect with and when she began to insist that Adam leave the comfortable child ego state, he rebelled. His rebellion brought out the controlling aspects of Sandy's parental ego state which caused her to insist more emphatically that he take on his share of the load. Her insistence further solidified his rebellion and overtime the two simply grew apart.

Both Adam and Sandy agreed that what I had described was entirely possible and in fact probably an accurate explanation of the trajectory of their relationship from

beginning to their current status. With this acknowledgment, I concluded this session by asking them to consider how they may change their schemas of relating to each other and bring about a more bilateral and mutually engaging relationship pattern known as adult to adult. I also asked them to think of three ways that they could serve each other, carry them out, and bring the results back for session five.

Session V

The goal of session five was for Adam and Sandy to begin constructing different schemas for relating to each other. I challenged Adam to think differently about how he envisioned Sandy. I asked Adam to briefly describe how he envisioned Sandy and almost all of his description of her was consumed with the roles that she fulfills in the home for him and the girls. I then asked Adam to describe himself in relation to Sandy as she fulfills these roles. Adam concluded that most of the transactions that occurred between him and Sandy placed him in the position of being a passive recipient instead of an active participant. We then considered the homework assignment of serving Sandy. He stated that it was difficult to come up with ideas to serve her and once he did, it was difficult for her to receive his service and acknowledge his effort. He also acknowledged that it was a shift for him to be actively looking for ways to serve his wife. I responded that this exercise was designed to promote a shift in how he thinks about himself and the way that he should relate to his wife. It was designed to promote a change in his schema of relating to Sandy. For years his schema for relating with Sandy was concerned more with how Sandy could serve him and therefore resembled the parent-child transactional pattern. Serving Sandy is an attempt to shift the schema to a more mutual and bilateral transactional pattern that exists among equals. I cautioned Adam regarding Sandy's and

his own resistance to this shift. Sandy would resist the shift because she would regard it as a ploy from him to get something from her in return. I encouraged Adam that this kind of intentional shift would have to be made honestly and without compensation expected and that it would have to be consistent over time if a change was possible. Sandy has a schema too and his role in empowering her to shift her schema lay in his consistently relating to her as someone to serve and relate to in a more mutual fashion. I asked him to consider continuing the homework assignment and he agreed that he would do so.

Sandy's schema of relating to Adam has been parent-child for many years. She has even verbalized within the sessions that she often referred to him as her fourth child. I asked her if there was anything positive about his "boyishness" and she said no. I asked her to consider if his playfulness could perhaps call attention to her inability to loosen up and let her hair down a bit. She stated that maybe it could but she feared that if she loosened up, things would go undone and the family would suffer for it. I called her attention back to the time early in their relationship when they would have fun together and operate on more of a child-child schema from time to time. I asked her to categorize those moments as either healthy or unhealthy and she classified them as healthy. I agreed with her classification and then pointed out that if she really wanted to connect with Adam in a meaningful way part of this connection would depend upon her willingness to relate with him in this pattern from time to time because it is the most comfortable ego state for him. I then went on to point out that relating to Adam on a child-child continuum was also healthy for her because of the fact that her child ego state was blocked or inhibited at some time in the past and this part of her was what his playfulness tapped into in their earlier days. She acknowledged that this may be true but what about

relating to each other as adults and so we turned our attention to Sandy's role in fostering adult-adult relationships and parent-parent relationships. I followed the same pattern with Sandy that I did with Adam as it relates to how she viewed him in her schema. I challenged her to allow for the possibility for Adam to behave in an ego state other than that of a child. I encouraged her to affirm him when he made attempts at cultivating his adult and parental ego state. Her role was to encourage and to affirm him in these attempted shifts. Her affirmation would serve to reinforce his behavior. I also encouraged her to think of ways that she could invite him to operate on these levels instead of demand that he operate on these levels. We concluded session five by concluding with Sandy that she had a two front approach for connecting with Adam: 1. She must allow herself to relate to him on the child to child pattern from time to time and that she needed this interaction as much as he did. 2. She must invite, encourage and affirm all attempts on his part to exhibit behaviors from the parental and adult ego states and not demand them from him or denigrate him when he fails to exhibit these behaviors appropriately. We concluded that Sandy taking the role of the parent only enforces Adam assuming the role of the child. She can empower him to develop his adult and parental ego states only by affirming their development as a peer and demanding them as a superior.

Session VI

The goal of session six was to wrap up and consolidate gains that had been made so far in the counseling process and point Adam and Sandy toward the biblical model of marriage that was shared in chapter 2. There was a stated need for additional sessions

and these sessions were conducted but the bulk of the work was accomplished within the timeframe of these six sessions.

Conclusions

Having conducted these six sessions with Adam and Sandy, I have been able to draw some interesting conclusions regarding my personal philosophy of marriage and family therapy. The first conclusion that I would assert is that family systems are indeed somewhat prescriptive regarding the development of our personality and our dominant ego states and relational patterns, but they are not absolutely deterministic. Change is always possible but not without first discovering the pattern or patterns that need to be changed. From there one must discover the underlying pathology of those patterns in order to launch the process of changing them. I believe that it is true that self-awareness is the key to personal growth and maturity. However, it is not enough to be aware of the prevailing behavior patterns and their respective pathologies if a couple desires to enhance their relationship. If relational health is their goal, the couple must gain an alternative vision of what health looks like and discover the strategies and skills necessary for them to achieve that vision. This is the role of the therapist. I believe that most couples want a happy marriage. I believe that most couples want to get along and relate meaningfully with their spouse. But I also believe that most couples do not have an inkling of what a happy and meaningful relationship would look like and, more than this, they don't know how to get there. The role of the therapist is first to diagnose their problems and help them come to an understanding of those problems, but then to help them to create a more healthy alternative to their current status.

The second conclusion that I can draw from this entire process is that life in general and marriage in particular is a rhythmic dance and that the steps we learn early on in the dance will determine where we end up. Couples develop their own unique behavioral and relational patterns in the first two to three years of marriage and those patterns can and usually do continue for the duration of their relationship unless there is a major upheaval or intervention. Some of those patterns are positive and some are negative, and the negative patterns can often overshadow the positive patterns to the point of extinction or at least irrelevance. The role of the therapist is to assist the couple in learning new steps and to do this the therapist must assist the couple in making intentional and purposeful attempts to do so. The original negative behavior patterns seldom exist because someone decided to initiate a negative behavior pattern. The behavior pattern simply evolved as a natural result of the family of origin systems and life experiences of each spouse. In laymen's terms, the patterns simply "just happened". But to change these patterns, the couple can not depend upon the change "just happening". They must bring about the change in their marital and family system through intentional efforts. The therapist is there to guide and encourage this process, but only the couple can make it "happen".

The final conclusion that I want to discuss relates to Transactional Analysis and the "one flesh" relationship model of marriage as described in scripture. The "one flesh" relationship is built upon bilateral and unconditional covenantal love. Each partner assumes personal responsibility for relating to the other in a way that demonstrates this love. This love gives way to the acceptance that comes with grace and mutual empowering. The end result of this relationship is a deep abiding intimacy that exists

between two partners in an egalitarian fashion bespeaks sacrificial love and service. At the heart of this relationship is the mutual submission among equals who seek to relate to each other as two parts of the one whole. In my understanding Transactional Analysis provides the therapist with an effective therapeutic framework and tools for bringing about this bilateral pattern of relating. Its goal is to identify the negative behavior patterns that spring from self-serving, stroking motivations and life-scripts and then alter the behaviors to assist couple in relating to each other for mutual benefit and service. It seeks to assist couples in developing healthy schema and life-scripts that will enable them to relate to each other in a more bilateral and egalitarian fashion. While I acknowledge the fact that the origins of Transactional Analysis lie in humanistic thinking and proceed from a humanistic worldview, I do think it is useful for the Christian therapist who can skillfully apply its principles within a Christian worldview which has the “one-flesh” relationship as their model for marriage and family.

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